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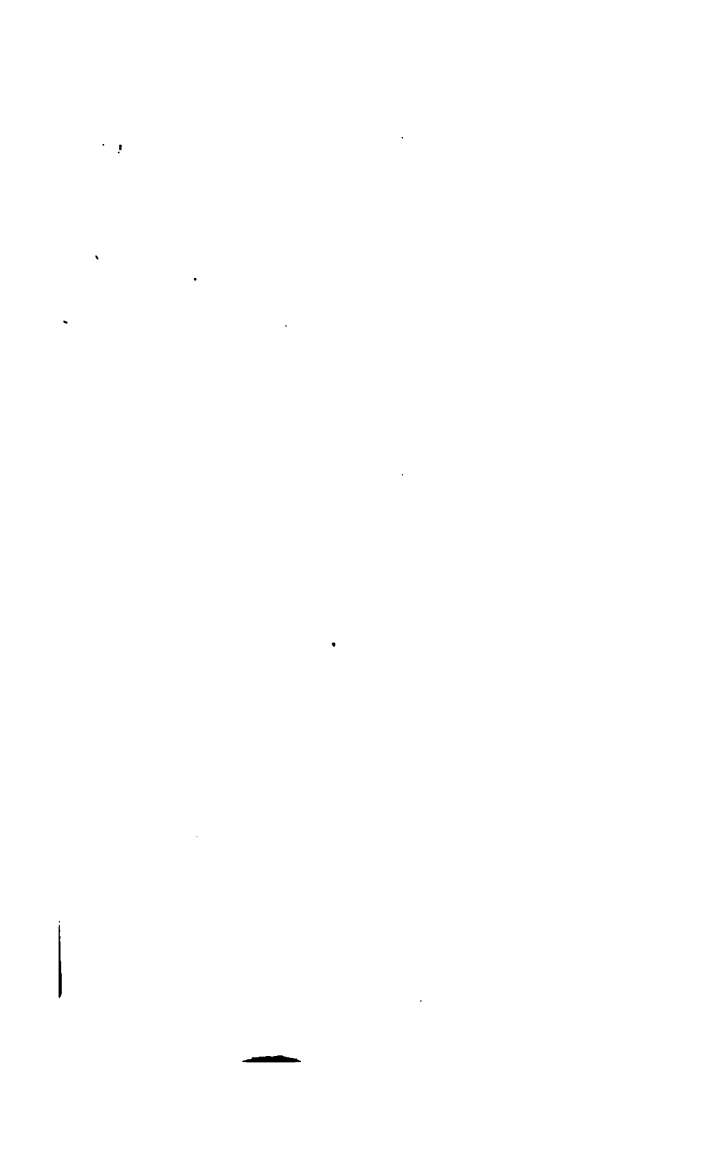
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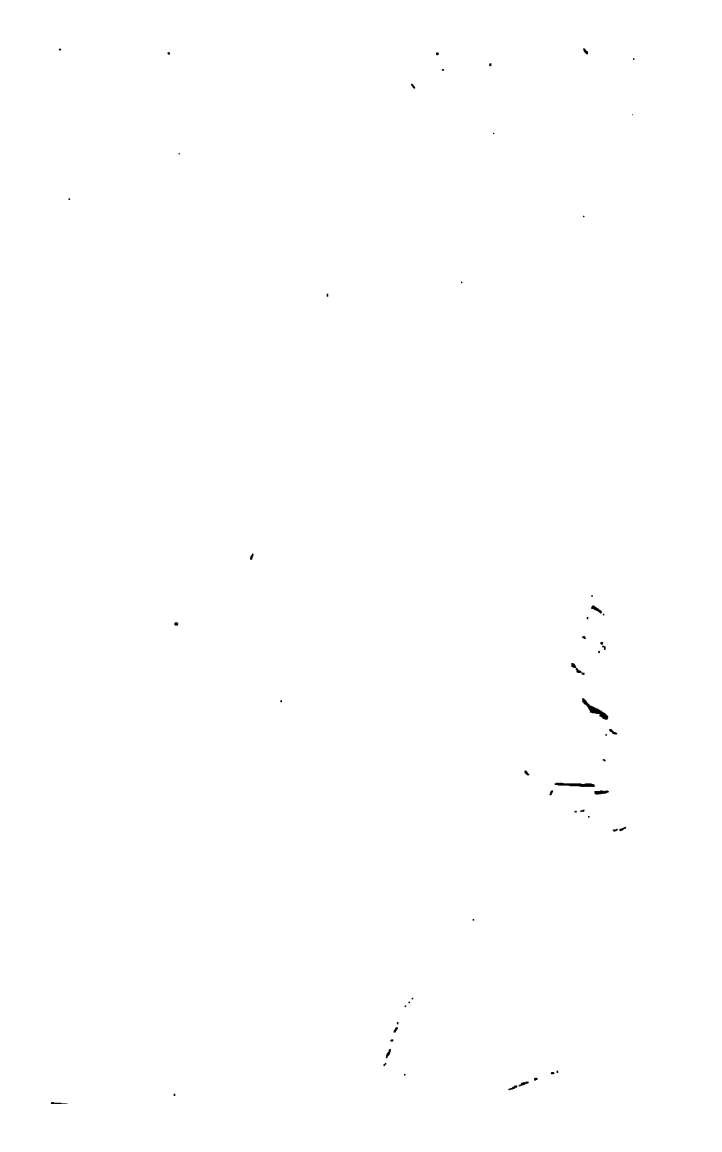


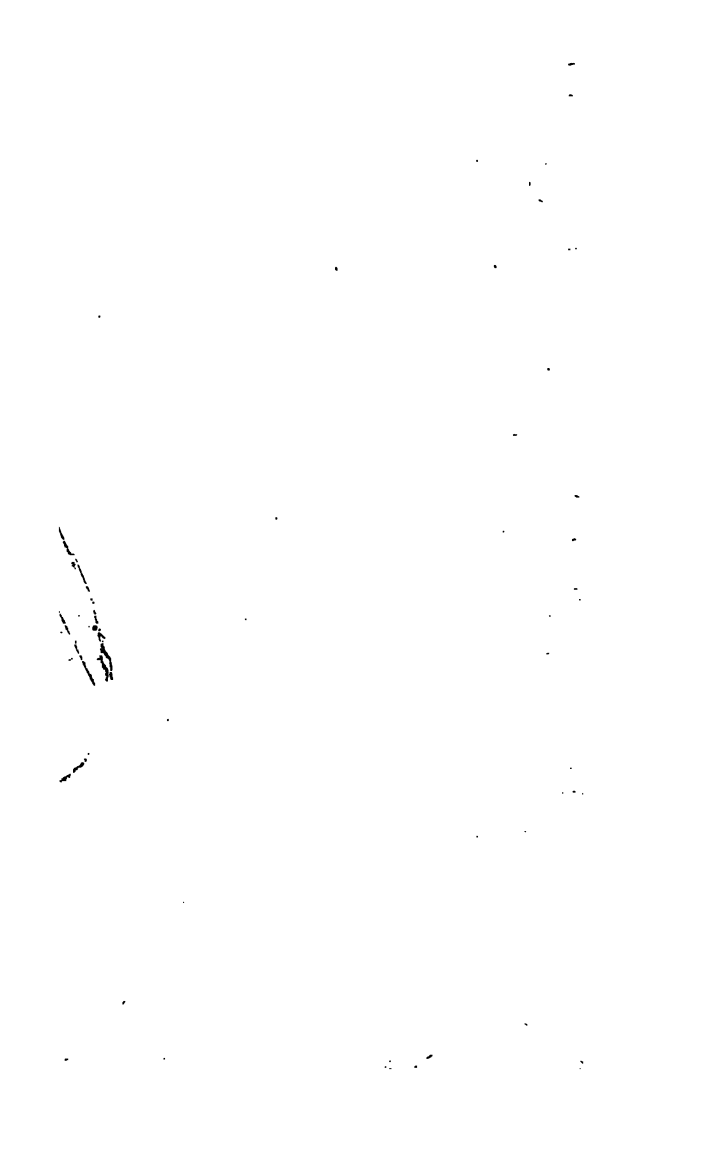
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THE

CLASS-LEADER'S MANUAL:

Or, an Essay on

THE DUTIES, DIFFICULTIES, QUALIFICATIONS, MOTIVES,
AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF CLASS LEADERS.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

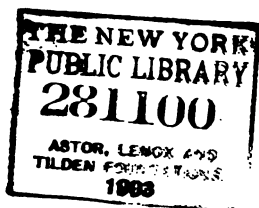
AN INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER ON THE HISTORY AND
SCRIPTURAL BASIS OF CLASS MEETINGS.

BY REV. CHARLES C. KEYS,

OF THE NEW-YORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

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P R E F A C E .

CLASS-MEETINGS, although somewhat peculiar as a means of grace, have, from a very early period in the history of Methodism, been considered as essential to her prosperity. As a denomination, we are pretty well agreed in placing a high estimate on this means of grace. Our success, as a people, and the rapid enlargement of our Zion, may be attributed, in no small degree, to this and other peculiar appliances, which have been employed among us.

But as classes consist of those "smaller companies," into which "each society is divided," and "one of whom is styled the leader," it is evident that they cannot be maintained without this officer. We accordingly find, that wherever a Methodist Church is, there are to be found not only classes, but class-leaders. They are introduced with the itinerancy wherever this form of Christianity prevails, and become an important instrumentality in "spreading" and maintaining that "Scriptural holiness," the promotion of which is its great design. But it is to be feared that there is a growing indifference to this

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weighty interest of the Church. It does not seem to command that attention which its importance requires; and there is, consequently, great misapprehension prevailing *in*, as well as out of, the Church, in reference to its import and design. It is assumed to be the duty of all classes in the Church, from the highest grade of our ministry down to the private member, to be well acquainted with what is vital to our economy, to be able to appreciate its value, and also meet the skepticism and resistance with which it may be assailed. But is this the case? Are not our people too generally deficient in the knowledge and understanding of our peculiarities, and disposed to relax the vigour with which the regulations of the Church have heretofore been enforced? And, are not concessions of too liberal a nature often made to those, who, by misrepresenting her institutions, thereby seek to prejudice the minds of our members against them? Where, then, is the remedy for this evil? Evidently, in the removal of all misconception on the subject, and in the general diffusion of correct knowledge. And if this be necessary, in reference to the members of the Church generally, it is so, more particularly, in reference to their leaders, who, in a considerable degree, mould their opinions, and influence their

action. If unfortunate results follow from the ignorance of class-members, then must error and misconception on the part of leaders be still more prejudicial to the interests of the Church. This class of men should be well acquainted with the nature and responsibilities of their office, as well as qualified for the performance of its arduous functions. Means should be employed to quicken their zeal, and to encourage them in their disinterested toil. The Church has not, it appears to us, fully acquitted herself in this respect. "Notwithstanding the serious responsibilities of the office, it may be safely asserted, that no class of agents are appointed and set to work in a more sudden and unexpected manner. While other agencies of inferior responsibilities undergo a suitable preliminary probation, these are often thrust into office without any preparatory trial, and being persons who entertain a deep conviction of the importance of the charge, and humble views of their own qualifications, none, under such circumstances, can be more desirous of friendly counsel and encouragement." —(*London*) *Class-leader's Magazine*.

But such look in vain for any periodical devoted to their benefit, or for any material assistance offered them through the medium of the press. With the exception of two or three small tracts,

(I speak now in reference to this country,) I know not that we have anything to supply the want of which we speak. Perhaps the novelty of this office, as it exists among us, may have contributed to the barrenness of our church literature in this respect. Methodism, in the various forms under which it has been developed, is a child of Providence, and the exigencies which have arisen in its rapid progress through the world, have not always been provided for by previous legislation and counsel. Circumstances have suggested, from time to time, what was necessary, and the action of the Church has corresponded therewith. If the system of classes, and the office of leader, as they are known in Methodism, had been always in vogue, there would not probably be wanting standard treatises adapted to this peculiar feature of our economy.

It is to meet this want of the times, that this little volume has been prepared. Actuated by a deep interest in the subject, and by a desire to instruct and encourage this worthy class of church officers, the author would desire to place his work in the hands of every leader, hoping that the objects herein aimed at, may, under the divine blessing, be, in some good degree, accomplished.

CHARLES C. KEYS.

Tarrytown, N. Y., May, 1850.

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THE
CLASS-LEADER'S MANUAL.

CHAPTER I.
INTRODUCTORY.

SECTION I.

A succinct history of Class-meetings.

JOHN WESLEY was called to engage in a work of the greatest magnitude and importance. The vigorous prosecution of that work required every possible collateral aid. But when Methodism first commenced its circuit of light and usefulness, it had no church organization; and none of those powerful auxiliaries by which it is now distinguished, for the accomplishment of its great designs. Class-meetings had not yet been thought of, and even the societies themselves were not formed, until some time after this eminent man had become remarkable for his zeal and method in doing good. They were both introduced in their turn, in correspondence with those providential indications, which, as the star of Bethlehem, led to the consummation which he

so devoutly wished, and for which alone he laboured and prayed.

"I must premise," says Mr. Wesley, "that as they (the Methodists) had not the least expectation, at first, of anything like what has since followed, so they had no previous design or plan at all ; but everything arose just as the occasion offered. They saw or felt some impending or pressing evil, or some good end necessary to be pursued. And many times they fell unawares on the very thing that secured the good, or removed the evil. At other times, they consulted on the most probable means, following only common sense and Scripture ; though they generally found, in looking back, something in Christian antiquity likewise, very nearly parallel thereto.

"1. About ten years ago, my brother and I were desired to preach in many parts of London. We had no view therein, but, so far as we were able, (and we knew God could work by whomsoever it pleased him,) to convince those who would hear what true Christianity was, and to persuade them to embrace it.

"2. The points we chiefly insisted on were four: First, that orthodoxy, or right opinions, is, at best, but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all ; that nei-

ther does religion consist in negatives, in bare harmlessness of any kind ; nor merely in externals, in doing good, or using the means of grace, in works of piety, (so called,) or of charity ; that it is nothing short of, or different from, 'the mind that was in Christ ;' the image of God stamped upon the heart ; inward righteousness, attended with the peace of God ; and 'joy in the Holy Ghost.' Secondly, that the only way under heaven to this religion is, to 'repent and believe the gospel ;' or, (as the apostle words it,) 'repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' Thirdly, that by this faith, 'he that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, is justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' And lastly, that being justified by faith, we taste of the heaven to which we are going ; we are holy and happy ; we tread down sin and fear, and 'sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.'

"3. Many of those who heard this, began to cry out that we 'brought strange things to their ears ;' that this was doctrine which they never heard before ; or, at least, never regarded. They 'searched the Scriptures, whether these things were so,' and acknowledged 'the truth as it is in Jesus.' Their hearts also were influenced, as well as their understanding, and they

determined to follow 'Jesus Christ and him crucified.'

"4. Immediately they were surrounded with difficulties ;—all the world rose up against them ; neighbours, strangers, acquaintance, relations, friends, began to cry out amain, ' Be not righteous overmuch ; why shouldst thou destroy thyself ?' Let not much religion 'make thee mad.'

"5. One, and another, and another came to us, asking what they should do, being distressed on every side ; as every one strove to weaken, and none to strengthen their hands in God. We advised them, 'Strengthen you one another.' Talk together as often as you can. And pray earnestly with and for one another, that you may 'endure to the end, and be saved.' Against this advice we presumed there could be no objections ; as being grounded on the plainest reason, and on so many Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and New, that it would be tedious to recite them.

"6. They said, ' But we want you likewise to talk with us often, to direct and quicken us in our way, to give us the advices which you well know we need, and to pray with us, as well as for us.' I asked, Which of you desire this ? Let me know your names and places of abode



They did so. But I soon found they were too many for me to talk with severally so often as they wanted it. So I told them, 'If you will all of you come together every Thursday, in the evening, I will gladly spend some time with you in prayer, and give you the best advice I can.'

"7. Thus arose, without any previous design on either side, what was afterward called a *Society*; (see Appendix A;) a very innocent name, and very common in London, for any number of people associating themselves together. The thing proposed in their associating themselves together, was obvious to every one. They wanted to 'flee from the wrath to come,' and to assist each other in so doing. They therefore united themselves, in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they might help each other 'to work out their salvation.'

"It quickly appeared, that their thus uniting together answered the end proposed therein. In a few months, the far greater part of those who had begun to 'fear God and work righteousness,' but were not united together, grew faint in their minds, and fell back into what they were before. Meanwhile, the far greater part of those who were thus united together continued

‘striving to enter in at the strait gate,’ and ‘to lay hold on eternal life.’

“Upon reflection, I could not but observe, This is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity. In the earliest times, those whom God sent forth, ‘preached the gospel to every creature.’ And the *oi akroatai*, ‘the body of hearers,’ were mostly either Jews or heathens; but as soon as any of these were so convinced of the truth, as to forsake sin and seek the gospel salvation, they immediately joined them together, took an account of their names, advised them to watch over each other, and met these *katechoumenoi*, ‘catechumens,’ (as they were then called,) apart from the great congregation, that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them, and for them, according to their several necessities.”—*Wesley's Works*, vol. v, pp. 176, 177.

In giving another relation of the same story he says: “In November, 1738, two or three persons, who desired ‘to flee from the wrath to come,’ and then a few more, came to me in London, and desired me to advise and pray with them. I said, ‘If you will meet me on Thursday night, I will help you as well as I can.’ More and more then desired to meet with them, till they were increased to many hundreds. The



case was afterward the same at Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle, and many other parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. It may be observed, the desire was on their part, not mine. My desire was to live and die in retirement. But I did not see that I could refuse them my help, and be guiltless before God."—*Works*, vol. v, p. 220.

We perceive, then, not only that societies for Christian communion existed before the days of the Wesleys, (see Appendix A,) but that Mr. John Wesley himself was indebted to a society of this character for having "the way of God expounded more perfectly" to him, when as yet his views of the gospel plan were confused and indistinct. We see also that the first society of Methodists, anxious "to flee from the wrath to come," and soliciting the pastoral advices of our honoured founder, was nothing more nor less than a Methodist class, although the division of that society into smaller companies, with their leaders or sub-pastors, had not yet been effected.

But this measure was not long postponed. The class, as a peculiar appliance of the Methodist economy, is also a child of Providence. It was first used as a convenient means for collecting weekly contributions for the payment of the church debt at Bristol, and it was immediately

afterwards suggested and employed as a means of Christian communion. Its introduction is thus noticed by Mr. Wesley:—

“When a large number of people was joined, the great difficulty was to keep them together, for they were continually scattering hither and thither, and we knew no way to help it. But God provided for this also, when we thought not of it. A year or two after, Mr. Wesley met the chief of the society in Bristol, and inquired, ‘How shall we pay the debt on the preaching-house?’ Captain Foy stood up and said, ‘Let every one in the society give a penny a week, and it will easily be done.’ ‘But many of them,’ said one, ‘have not a penny to give.’ ‘True,’ said the captain, ‘then put ten or twelve of them to me; let each of these give what they can weekly, and I will supply what is wanting.’ Many others made the same offer. So Mr. Wesley divided the societies among them, assigning a class of about twelve persons to each of these, who were termed leaders.

“Not long after, one of these informed Mr. Wesley that calling on such a one in his house, he found him quarrelling with his wife. Another was found in drink. It immediately struck into Mr. Wesley’s mind, ‘This is the very thing we wanted. The leaders are the persons who may not only re-

ceive the contributions, but also watch over the souls of their brethren.' The society in London, being informed of this, willingly followed the example of that in Bristol;* as did every society from that time, whether in Europe or America. By this means it was easily found if any grew weary or faint, and help was speedily administered. And if any walked disorderly, they were quickly discovered, and either amended or dismissed."—*Wesley's Works*, vol. vii, p. 316.

It is thus perceived, that there was no original plan, or previously contrived system, upon which the classes of Methodism were formed. The great design of Mr. Wesley was to raise up a holy people, and to diffuse widely as possible the pure gospel which he so assiduously and earnestly preached. This was his general motive. Under its influence he went forth into the

* "Thurs. 25.—I appointed several earnest and sensible men to meet me, to whom I showed the great difficulty I had long found of knowing the people who desired to be under my care. After much discourse, they all agreed there could be no better way to come to a sure, thorough knowledge of each person, than to divide them into classes, like those at Bristol, under the inspection of those in whom I could most confide. This was the origin of our classes at London, for which I can never sufficiently praise God; the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having ever since been more and more manifest."—*Journal for March, 1742*. *Wesley's Works*, vol. iii, p. 246.

"highways and hedges," "the streets and lanes of the city," intent only upon fulfilling his high ministerial functions, and discharging his imperative duties as an ambassador of Christ. Like Abraham, he considered it his duty to obey, and "went out, not knowing whither he went." He could not "see the end from the beginning." He was unable to anticipate the remote consequences of those measures which he was at first led to pursue. This, however, made not the difference of a hair. His only concern was with the path of duty, and to him that path was a plain one. It is not saying all the truth to say, he was led by Providence. He was not only under a controlling influence that was gracious and divine, but he walked by faith. He had unshaken confidence in God as to the results of the warfare upon which he had entered, and surrendered himself up to the control of those circumstances in which he believed himself to be providentially placed. It was his part only to watch the guiding-star of his destiny, and follow as he was led. In this manner he progressed, step by step. As new openings presented themselves, he entered and occupied the ground. Always ready for labour, he employed himself diligently in cultivating as large a portion as possible of that "field" which "is the world," and



made use of those instruments by which he calculated an ample reward of his toil would be secured.

This principle gave character to all his movements, and impressed its genius upon all his plans. Thus were all the appliances which are peculiar to Methodism introduced, and thus was he led particularly to the adoption of class-meetings, as a means for detecting the disorderly, and preserving the purity of his societies.

SECTION II.

The Scriptural basis of Class-meetings.

It seems to be necessary, not only that class-leaders should know something of the history of that institution which makes their office necessary, but that they should also understand what is claimed for them, in their character as church-officers, and the light in which, according to Scripture, we are to regard the institution itself. With this view we submit the following observations :—

It is not contended that this institution is of Divine appointment, or that, in the specific form which it obtains among Methodists, it had any existence in the primitive Church. Like many other prudential regulations for the fulfilment of positive obligations, it has arisen with the exi-

gencies and providential indications of the times, and has been used in subordination to the established ordinances of the gospel, for the accomplishment of its great and leading designs. But, nevertheless, it has a strictly Scriptural basis for its support. The principle to be recognized is this,—That in the constitution of the Church and her various officers, certain general principles are involved, to be applied to circumstances as they occur, according to the best judgment which may be formed concerning the nature and necessities of the case. These principles are inherent in the very nature and design of the Church, and are not therefore to be set aside or acted upon at pleasure. It is only the mode of applying them which is discretionary with those whom “God hath set in the Church” for this purpose. This may be illustrated by an analogous case. A man is appointed to take charge of a school. He may not, as is frequently the case, receive any specific instructions, but be left to govern himself by those general rules which the nature and duties of his appointment involve. But has he not authority, and is he not bound to use his best judgment in forming such regulations for the conduct and government of his school, as may best promote the improvement and proficiency of his pupils? And is not the

authority for these minor regulations found in his own appointment, and therefore endorsed by those who have given him employment? To be more particular, does not his office require that he should call his pupils together at stated times for instruction, that he should make a suitable organization of the classes, that he should appoint subordinate assistants or monitors from among the pupils themselves, if he sees it necessary, (as is very commonly done,) that he should institute certain rules for the discipline and government of his school, and pursue whatever other measures he may deem proper to fulfil the wishes, and to promote the designs, of those from whom he has received his authority. Now although, in this case, his own appointment only can be traced to the proper authority, yet all the inferior regulations of which we speak are involved in that appointment, and are therefore authorized in the same manner. Thus God has instituted the Church, and appointed its officers for specific purposes, without prescribing the means which are to be uniformly used for the accomplishment of these purposes, but leaving them to be suggested by the varying circumstances of the Church, and by the judgment of those who exercise rule, and who are held accountable for the just exercise of the functions of their office.

The name of the Church itself (*ecclesia*, from *ekkallo*, to call out) implies a separation from the world, and, connected with other appellations by which it is distinguished, (such as the "people of God," his "sheep," his "vine," his "children," his "sons and daughters," &c.,) an organization into a separate communion. So that to be a Christian, in the proper sense, implies such a separation from the world, and such a communion with the saints. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. vi, 14-18. But the great Head of the Church has used his prerogative in the appointment of proper officers for the exercise of pastoral care and government. "He gave some apostles, and

some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. iv, 11,12. Here, then, is the school of Christ, in which he has appointed the "tutors and governors." And while all Christ's disciples are required to connect themselves with this school, for instruction in the "faith and the knowledge of the Son of God," those whom he has appointed as "teachers," are held responsible for the exercise of their best judgment in the use of means for the accomplishment of this object. The work to be done is well defined and perfectly understood, but the machinery for its performance is left to ourselves. This will apply to the general principles of church government. No plan of ecclesiastical rule is prescribed in the New Testament. "Neither Christ himself, nor his holy apostles, have commanded anything clearly or expressly, concerning the external form of the Church, or the precise method according to which it should be governed. The truth is, that Christ, by leaving this matter undetermined, has left to Christian societies a discretionary power of modelling the government of the Church in such a manner as the circumstantial reasons of times, places, &c. may require;

and, therefore, the wisest government of the Church is the best and most divine; and every Christian society has a right to make laws for itself, provided that these laws be consistent with charity and peace, and with the fundamental doctrines and principles of Christianity."—*Mosheim's Church History*, vol. i, p. 37.

The different methods of church government, and the prudential means of grace, are to be similarly classed. Thus, one department of the Church may seek to accomplish its mission by Episcopacy, another by Congregationalism, and others again by yet different forms of ecclesiastical polity. And the various denominations may each be distinguished for their prudential institutions; but while aiming at the same object, and in its promotion making use of their best judgment, and their maturest energies, they are all to be recognized as labourers together in the gospel of our common Lord. One may have certain grades of office which are repudiated by another. One may have its consistory, another its precentors, and another its churchwardens, or corps of leaders. Some may have their conference-meetings, and others their classes or love-feasts, while others again resort to still different means, for purposes of Christian communion and mutual edification. While one

thinks that the more intimate and familiar intercourse of class-meetings is necessary, and may be made to subserve an important purpose, the other may be of a very different opinion. "Let every one be persuaded in his own mind," and every one will be accepted "according to that he hath." Now the question is, whether class-meetings are not authorized by the principle here exposed? Let us remember the design of the institution. We seek to accomplish thereby no other ends than those proposed by the gospel, and contemplated by the Christian ministry, as appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ—to "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance." Eph. i, 10, 11; John xi, 52. This is the proper work of Christ's ministers, and they are held responsible for its faithful performance. Hence the counsel, encouragement, or reproof, as the case may be, is directed by our Lord, in the case of the seven Churches of Asia, not to the members individually, nor to the Church in her collective capacity, but to the angels of the several Churches. Rev. ii, iii. In order then to acquit themselves to their Lord and Judge, and more efficiently to perform their appropriate work, as pastors over "the flock of Christ," the Metho-

dist ministry makes use of class-meetings. (See Appendix B.) And if they are authorized to employ these means, then are the members of the Church over whom they exercise this pastoral care, under a corresponding obligation to submit thereto, as the order of those who "have the rule over them in the Lord." While the one is answerable for the manner in which he performs his high responsibilities, the other is required to exhibit a becoming docility and submission. This accords with the teaching of the apostle: "I beseech you, brethren, that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth." 1 Cor. xvi, 15, 16. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you." Heb. xiii, 17. To raise up a holy people, to furnish them the necessary religious instruction, to promote Christian communion, and "to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," are the ends contemplated by this institution. The close intercourse which is thus had together, the frequency with which we meet in Christian communion, the particular inquiry which the leader presses at such times, as to the religious state of his members, the con-

stant and uninterrupted manner in which the subject of religion is kept before their minds, and the regular intervals at which they meet, while they constitute some of the peculiar features of the institution, are calculated to excite and prompt the mind, and to secure a religious character, harmonizing with all the obligations of the Christian profession. The affectionate superintendence and pastoral oversight exercised by the leader, is an admirable means for stimulating the members of his class, and has a tendency to promote and maintain an advanced state of grace. And if this officer realizes, in a due degree, his responsibilities as a sub-pastor, and is careful to discharge the obligations which he has assumed with fidelity, there can be no reasonable doubt but those under his care will thrive in spiritual things, and realize the highest grade of Christian experience.

If, then, the Christian ministry are at liberty to use whatever form of church government they see proper, in fulfilling the purposes of their holy calling, then is that liberty unrestricted, save by the necessities of the case; and of this they themselves are to be the judges. Among Methodists, (and we are not now writing for any others,) this principle will be admitted. It follows then from our own principles, as applied to church govern-

ment in general, that we have as good a right to require from our members a subscription to the expediency and lawfulness of class-meetings, as to episcopacy or any other form of church government. And in making an attendance on class a condition of church-membership, we lay a necessity upon them of no other kind than that which is involved in the general constitution of our Church. The whole array of means which we employ is deemed necessary for the promotion of those objects for which we have been invested with the ministerial office. We thus see in what manner Divine authority is given for those prudential arrangements which are peculiar to the various churches of Christendom, and in which the classes of Methodism are to be included. Under himself, God has appointed his ministers the pastors and governors of the Church. They occupy a position in the Church similar to that which a parent does in his family. Although the centre of all authority is in God himself, yet he exacts obedience from children to their parents, (Col. iii, 20 ; Eph. vi, 1-3,) as also from church-members to their pastors : (1 Cor. xvi, 15, 16 ; Heb. xiii, 17 ;) in both cases premising that the authority exercised is reasonable, and not in conflict with the higher obligations we are under to God, but adapted to

fulfil the ends of family government and pastoral rule. But the parent is supposed to know what is best rather than the child for all the ends of the family compact, and the ministers of Christ, equally responsible, are supposed to know what is best for all the ends of church government and relationship, and are therefore empowered to use what may seem to them the most feasible means for obtaining these ends, as well as to execute government against the unruly.

This principle has always controlled the action of the Church in the formation of its rules and regulations. From the days of the apostles until now, this responsibility has been felt, and has given birth to the various expedients which from age to age have been in vogue for the propagation of the truth, and for the prosperity of the Church. Of this character were the canons of the primitive Church. To instance only in one particular, for the sake of illustration,—that by which, upon pain of excommunication, members were required to receive the Lord's supper every time they met, which in many cases was every day in the week:—"If any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord's supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the Church of God." Now the thing here required, it is

admitted, like the Christian fellowship of the class-meeting, is of Scriptural obligation ; but the frequency, mode, and other circumstances connected with its observance, are left to be determined by the authorities of the Church ; and the means which they are to use to secure such observance, are also left to be determined by their own sense of what is necessary and proper.

Of the same nature are some of our general rules, embodying Scriptural principles, and therefore expressing Scriptural obligations, but no more authorized as conditions of church-membership than the communion of saints, as maintained by the system of classes ; *e. g.*, the rule in reference to the sale and use of spirituous liquors, those concerning uncharitable and unprofitable conversation, softness, and needless self-indulgence, laying up treasure on earth, doing good, and family prayer. Now it is admitted that all these things are in accordance with that rule of our practice contained in the Holy Scriptures, but that they are any more imperatively required than the communion of saints, we have yet to learn. Are not the ministers of Christ, then, under equal obligation to see that the one is maintained as well as the other ? And have not the Methodists here the advantage of all other Churches, in the special provision they make for

the maintenance of this vital principle of religion, while, by others, it is left, in a great degree, to the uncertainties of chance? And, instead of being regarded as too strict and rigorous on this point, do they not rather deserve the cordial thanks of those who are permitted to reap the benefit of this regulation, and to enjoy the privileges connected therewith? It is very desirable that more enlightened and legitimate views prevailed on this subject.

But an argument may be drawn directly from the communion of saints, as enjoined in the Holy Scriptures. "A Methodist class-meeting is only a modification of that holy communion which has been enjoyed by the saints of God in all ages. Whatever appearance of novelty, in the view of some persons, there may be in the manner of conducting it, there is no novelty in the thing itself." (*Fish's Manual for Class-leaders*, p. 16.) Here is the same "fellowship one with another" (1 John i, 7) which was maintained among the members of the apostolic Churches. Here is the same practice which prevailed before the time of our Lord, and which obtained the Divine approval:—"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the

Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Mal. iii, 16, 17.

By this communion we fulfil a variety of apostolic precepts:—"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another." Heb. x, 24, 25. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." James v, 16. By this means we watch over one another "in brotherly love," "admonishing and exhorting one another daily." And thus we "do good to all, but *especially* to the household of faith ;" "comforting ourselves together, and edifying one another ;" (1 Thess. v. 11 ;) "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, and singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord ;" (Col. iii, 16 ;) "warning the unruly, comforting the feeble-minded, and supporting the weak ;" (1 Thess. v, 14 ;) "bearing one another's burdens ;" (Gal. vi, 2 ;) "and rejoicing with those who do rejoice, and weeping with those who weep." (Rom. xii, 15.)

To Peter, and through him to all his true suc-

cessors in the gospel ministry, was given the power of church discipline, by which persons are either received and approved, or excluded from the Christian Church, (Matt. xvi, 19,) and he requires in a special manner that we should "love the brotherhood," (1 Peter ii, 17,) that we should "be all of one mind, having compassion one of another," that we should "love as brethren," (1 Peter iii, 8,) that we should have "fervent charity among *ourselves*." (1 Peter iv, 8.) And in the same spirit he gives the general direction—"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another." (1 Peter v, 1-5.) Now, to say the least, the spirit, if not the letter of these commands is obeyed by our adherence to the system of classes.

Hereby is also realized that union of kindred

hearts, for which our Lord so earnestly prayed :
“ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word ; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” (John xvii, 20–23.) The Church is not divided, but “ one in Christ Jesus.” Its members are recognized as a brotherhood, (“ ye are brethren,”) sustain a common relation to its Divine Head, and are united by a common interest in the covenant of grace, and its multiplied blessings : and surely we are bound by everything sacred in our federal and fraternal relations to maintain and strengthen the bonds of this union.

We may take another important view of this subject. The Church on earth and the Church in heaven are one. The one is introductory and inchoative to the other. Hence the state of grace into which we are introduced on earth as preparatory to our entrance into the Church triumphant is called “ the kingdom of God,” and “ the kingdom of heaven.” It is the design of the one to fit and prepare us for the other.

And it is the aim and desire of Christ to have the Church militant as correct an image and transcript as possible of the Church triumphant: He "gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Now our fitness for membership in the Church triumphant must be predicated of, and based upon, that moral state of which the apostle here speaks. The same communion which is anticipated with the saints in heaven, must be relished and enjoyed with the saints on earth. It is only when we can sing,—

"And if our fellowship below,
In Jesus be so sweet,"

that we can add, in joyous hope,

"What height of rapture shall we know,
When round his throne we meet!"

This communion of saints then is essential to Christian character and church-membership. We are, therefore, bound to enforce and maintain it. Otherwise we encourage a false and delusive hope of enjoying the communion of saints above, without that preparation of spirit which is involved in our communion with the saints on earth.

“Nothing doth more further the increase and power of godliness in any place or person, than this. For, let it be observed, though there be never such an excellent ministry in any place, you shall see little thriving in grace amongst the people, until many of them become of one heart, showing it by consorting together in brotherly fellowship, in the communion of saints. Nothing bringeth more feeling, joy, comfort, and delight, (next the communion with God in Christ,) than the actual communion of saints, and the love of the brethren. It is the beginning of that our happiness on earth, which shall be perfected in heaven.”—*Henry Scudder*.

We would not “transgress the commandment of God by tradition,” in dwelling thus long upon a non-essential. But the communion of which we speak is inseparable from the idea of a Church, evangelically considered; it is vital to religion, and involves that charity without which we are “nothing.” It cannot be classed with the washing of hands, and other burdensome ceremonies, which originate in superstition, but must be considered as a necessary appendage to inward religion. Now, the point is, some means must be used to secure the development and maintenance of this essential principle. This is left discretionary with the pastors of the church;

and in the exercise of this liberty, with a view to the glory of God, and the prosperity of Christ's flock, the Methodist ministry have seen fit to employ that institution of which we here speak.

Even without those affinities, which are peculiar to renewed hearts, "we are naturally led to seek *communion* and *fellowship* with others."—*Hooker*.

There is a mutual interchange of sentiments and kind offices sought after, and eagerly desired, by the mere man of the world. "The communion of saints is the natural result of the law of association, sanctified by the Holy Spirit; and discovers the sound philosophy embodied in the old adage, 'birds of a feather flock together.' It may be received as an axiom arising out of the nature and fitness of things, or from the doctrine of affinities, that, among sentient beings, like will associate with like. It is so with the fashionables of the world, with pleasure-takers, with philosophers, with statesmen, with lovers of music, and with men of science; and it cannot be otherwise with the children of God."—*Henry Fish*.

When we take into consideration all the circumstances of the Christian man, the new character he sustains, and the untried scenes through which he is called to pass, together with the

numerous influences unfriendly to his safety to which he is constantly exposed, it will appear that Christian communion, a fellowship with those whose tastes, and feelings, and purposes are similar to his own, is very desirable, and the propensity thereto correspondingly strong.

This communion may be realized, to some extent, by simple membership in a Christian Church. We thus identify ourselves with God's people, and give some evidence of the union we have with them in spirit; and, to a limited extent, may enjoy an interchange of friendly thought and feeling. But this, however grateful, does not altogether meet the case. In addition to this general and public communion, there is a greater social intimacy sighed after by those who are "the children of God by Christ Jesus." The worldly man may be connected with associations for the purposes of speculation, literature, or politics, and may thereby answer all the proposed ends of such communities; yet without his more familiar associates, to rejoice with him in his successes, and to sympathize with him in his reverses, life itself loses half its charms, and his existence seems little better than a blank. And, in these respects, all men are alike. The disciple of Christ wants something more than a seat in the sanctuary, and a recognized member-

ship in the visible Church. His sympathetic nature seeks out those with whom he can "take sweet counsel, and walk together to the house of God in company." He is inclined toward the society of those who "fear God," and to whom with fraternal feeling he can say,—“Come and hear, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. Verily, God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.” (Ps. lxi, 16.) It is only by a direct contact of heart with heart, and by a commingling of sentiment and feeling, that the affinities of our sanctified natures may find their appropriate combination. This produces a spiritual union, more delightful in its experimental and practical results, and more refining in its tendency, than any inferior and less intimate attachments can possibly be. These purposes are all subserved, in a high degree, by class-meetings. The exercises of such meetings are those in which Christian communion is specially involved. Friendly inquiry after each other's welfare, converse upon “the deep things of God,” the relation of Christian experience, and mutual encouragement to perseverance under the common trials of the Christian life, are the means by which the ends of this institution are advanced. Here also suitable instruction is given. The leader inquires “how every soul in

his class prospers," and administers the counsel, comfort, or admonition which may be required. All have an opportunity of communicating their joys, and making known their sorrows, and of relating their varied temptations and spiritual conflicts. The circumstances in which we are thus placed necessarily bring us into close contact, and serve to cement our union, and render it more enduring.

"Sweetly thus we all agree,
Touch'd with softest sympathy ;
Kindly for each other care,
Every member feels its share.
Many are they now and one,
We who Jesus have put on ;
Names, and sects, and parties fall ;
Thou, O Christ, art all in all."

By this means we obtain a more perfect acquaintance with the great principles of spiritual life. The general uniformity of religious experience in different persons, though greatly varied in the aspects under which it may be presented, serves to strengthen faith, and to impart confidence. In this manner, "all the Lord's people" become "prophets," and teach each other, while being taught by those who, as leaders, exercise a subordinate pastoral care over them.

We cannot doubt but what means were taken in the apostolic and primitive Churches to an-

cover the same essential ends. Numerous regulations and offices existed, of which we know exceedingly little; but that the general purposes of these arrangements were similar to those contemplated by the different economies which now prevail, there can be but one opinion. The apostle informs us,—“God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” (1 Cor. xii, 25.) Here are as many as eight distinct classes of evangelical men, recognized by Divine inspiration, and all designed for the “edifying of the body of Christ.” That they were all ordained men, and engaged in the work of the Christian ministry, is more perhaps than we can readily believe. But that they all had a part to perform in advancing the great objects of the ministry, there can be no doubt. And that some of these various auxiliaries might have resembled our class-leaders, in the relative position which they occupied in the Church, though not admitting of demonstration, may, nevertheless, be reasonably supposed, without doing violence to the established principles of interpretation. Among those here mentioned are *simple “teachers,”* and *helps*. We may at least be safe in saying, that the class-leader is a *teacher*

in the Church of God, and an eminent *help* to both preachers and people. There might not, at the time of which we speak, have been a division of the Church into classes, upon the same plan as that which now obtains in the Methodist Churches, but it is more than probable, that by these different officers the most diligent, affectionate, and particular pastoral care was exercised over every member of the flock of Christ.

“All these offices were of Divine institution. They seem to have been necessary to the state of things which the gospel dispensation introduced. They were adapted by infinite wisdom to the exigencies of the times in which they were exercised. The whole of them, however, were not intended to be of permanent duration. Some of them were altogether of a supernatural order, and came to an end with the age of miracles: the gift of prophecy failed, and of tongues ceased, and of knowledge by inspiration vanished away; but others of them were ordinary, and intended to be as durable as the world. These remained, and are exercised among us at this day.”—*Henry Fish*.

The history of the primitive Church, contained in the Acts of the Apostles, is too brief for us to expect explicit information as to those minute arrangements by which its government was

maintained, and its various interests promoted; but here is abundantly sufficient, with the intimations furnished in the apostolical epistles, to convince us that the pastoral work was deemed of first importance. The incidental allusions therein to be found, the directions given to the different churches, the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, together with the example of the apostles themselves, all go to confirm and establish this view. (See Appendix B.)

In making provision, then, as is done by the Methodists, for the most effectual pastoral oversight of their people, and in furnishing them at the same time with the stated means of Christian communion, we consider that they are imitating the model of the primitive Church, and following in the steps of Christ's apostles. "It is clear as daylight, that that kind of communion" which is promoted by class-meetings "has the express warrant of Holy Scripture; and that something more than Church communion in the sacrament of the Lord's supper was enjoyed by the primitive Christians. They had 'fellowship,' as well as 'breaking of bread.' How, for instance, could they exhort one another daily? How could they comfort and edify one another? How could they provoke one another to love and good works? How could they confess

their faults one to another, and pray one for another? How teach and admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs? How bear one another's burdens? How weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice, if they never met together for the purpose of conversing on experimental religion, and the state of each other's souls? Whatever persons may say to the contrary, those churches, the members of which do not observe, or in which they have not the opportunity of observing, the foregoing precepts which are enjoined in the New Testament Scriptures, are not based on the model of the apostolic Churches. That great and good man in whom Methodism originated, seems to have had correct views of what was necessary to constitute Christian communion, when he instituted class-meetings."—*Fish's Class-leader's Manual*, pp. 20, 21.

“Here we must notice, that it is the *thing itself, Christian fellowship*, and not the name, which we contend for. The experience of about sixty years has fully convinced us of its necessity; and we ourselves can say, that in the course of an extensive acquaintance with men and things, and the Church of God, for about twenty or thirty years, we have rarely met with one who has been much devoted to God, and at the same

time not united in close Christian fellowship to some religious society or other. Far be it from us to suppose that no fellowship meetings except ours are owned of God : so illiberal a sentiment never entered our minds. But we must say, that those who entirely neglect this *Divinely instituted* ordinance, (however various the names given to it, or the modes of conducting it may be,) manifest that they are either ashamed to acknowledge *as their brethren* the true children of God, or ‘are enemies of the cross of Christ.’ Phil. iii, 18. They wish to keep up a correspondence with the world, which Christian discipline could not long tolerate ; or they cannot bear to have their wounds probed to the bottom, that the balm of Gilead, the healing oil and wine of the gospel, may be applied by the Divine physician, ‘and the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanse them from all sin.’ (1 John i, 7.)

“We have no doubt but meetings of Christian brethren for the exposition of Scripture texts may be attended with their advantages. But the most profitable exercise of any, is a free inquiry into the state of the heart. We therefore confine these meetings to Christian experience, only adjoining singing and prayer in the introduction and conclusion. And we praise the Lord they have been made a blessing to scores

of thousands. And we must add, with gratitude to the Most High, that after an accurate attention to the point ourselves, and from the impartial account of several of our oldest and most useful ministers in different parts of the globe, we have cause to believe, that out of those who have *died members of our society*, far the greatest part have entered into glory in the triumph of faith. In short, we can truly say, that through the grace of God our classes form the pillars of our work, and are, in a considerable degree, our universities for the ministry."—*Bishop's Notes to Discipline*.

The foregoing arguments in vindication of the Scriptural character of class-meetings have been deemed necessary, from the fact not only of a careless observance and disesteem of this means of grace, prevailing to a considerable extent in some parts of our work, but because of the skepticism which, in some cases, has been expressed as to their Scriptural authority, and especially in reference to the rule concerning them, by which attendance is made a condition of church-membership.

On these points the leader of a class should be well-informed; and we have, therefore, prefixed these arguments to the chapters which are to follow, bearing more directly upon his office.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE NATURE OF THE LEADER'S OFFICE.

It is very necessary that correct views should be entertained concerning the nature of the office filled by a Methodist class-leader. And we are more impressed with the importance which should be attached to the subject of this chapter, from the consideration that the office of which we speak seems to have fallen below its proper level in the estimation in which it is held by many persons, and because of the latitudinarian and liberal construction which has been imposed upon those rules which prescribe a leader's duty. Our task, therefore, is to elevate this office from its state of depression, and give to it the consideration and dignity which it may properly claim; to hold it up in such a light as will present to view its prominent features and high obligations, so that he who occupies this position in the Church of God, may not fail to perceive what is required of him.

SECTION I.

The pastoral character of this office.

WE deem the office of a leader to be strictly pastoral. We are not to be understood, however,

as identifying this office with that of the Christian minister. The one is of Divine appointment, and designed to be perpetuated in the Church of God, through the present dispensation of his grace ; whereas the other is of human origin, suggested by the exigencies of the times, and the indications of Providence, and used by those vested with chief pastoral authority in the Church for the better fulfilment of their holy functions, in accordance with Scriptural principle and usage ; but, at the same time, susceptible of modification and change, as new circumstances in the condition of the Church may arise to require it. Though the office of a leader, then, is strictly pastoral, it is subordinately so. The duties which are prescribed to him are chiefly of a pastoral character, and designed for the assistance of the minister in his proper work.

The most common designation used to express the functions of the sacred office, "is that of pastor or shepherd. It is to be remembered, that in the first simplicity of mankind for many ages, men looked after their own cattle, or employed their children in it ; and when they trusted that care to any other, it was no small sign of their confidence, according to what Jacob said to Laban. The care of a good shepherd, then, was a figure so well understood, that the prophet

expresses God's care of his people by *this, of his feeding them as a shepherd, carrying his lambs in his bosom, and gently leading them that were with young.* (Isa. xl, 11.) Christ also calls himself *the good Shepherd that knew his sheep, and did not, as a hireling, fly away when the wolf came, but laid down his life for the sheep.* (John x, 1.) This, then, being so often made use of in both Testaments, is an expression of the great trust committed to the clergy, which likewise supposes a great, a constant, and a tender care in looking to, in feeding or instructing, in watching over, and guarding the flock against errors and sins, and their being ready to offer themselves to the first fury of persecution."—*Burnett's Pastoral Care.*

Now, so far as the class-leader is a "helper," or assistant, in the work of Christ's ministers, so far is he a pastor.

1. His office originated as a part of a scheme of finance, and being found conducive to the detection of immoral and disorderly persons, was immediately adopted as a means for promoting this, as well as other parts of the pastoral work. Thus the primary design of the office has, in a great measure, been substituted for that which was only a secondary and unlooked-for result. This is the case everywhere at the present time.

as no one will contend that our classes constitute only a convenient means for meeting our pecuniary liabilities. The prominent features of the institution, as set forth in our book of Discipline, are such only as to authorize the view which we have taken.

2. That the leader is expected to maintain this pastoral oversight, is indicated by the fact, that probationers are under his special charge, and cannot be received into full membership without his recommendation:—"Let none be received into the Church until they are recommended by a leader with whom they have met at least six months on trial," &c.—*Discipline*, p. 24.

He is to acquaint them with the rules of the Church, and to satisfy himself that they have been observed throughout the term of trial.*

There is no other way of entrance into the Church. No other officer, in the exercise of his own prerogatives, can supply, in this respect, a lack of service on the part of the leader, or neutralize the legitimate effect of his representations. The leader, of course, is a responsible officer, and may be removed, if need be, by the power which

* See Discipline, p. 25, ques. 1, ans. 3, sec. 2. To this rule, as being too often neglected, and as involving the duty of leaders, and not preachers, (who cannot be supposed to be present every time a person offers himself as a probationer,) we would invite special attention.

appointed him; but while in office, his representations are to be relied on; and aside therefrom, no action can be had in the recognition of persons who have stood out the term of their probation as full members. Entire confidence is placed in the integrity of this officer. It is supposed, that throughout the term of trial he has used all necessary means to acquaint himself with the character of the candidate, and to confirm him in Christian experience and practice; that he has no antipathies or partialities to gratify; and that his only aim is to render a good service to the Church, by preparing the probationers under his care for full communion, and by recommending only such as are qualified to adorn this position in the Church. By placing this responsibility upon the leader, it is expected, of course, that he will meet it in such a manner as to prevent unworthy persons from gaining admission into the Church, while, at the same time, all those who can be made available to her interests are, by the most vigilant and affectionate superintendence, secured. A most important part of pastoral labour is thus made to devolve upon the leader.

3. One of the principal duties of the leader is to assist the preacher in charge in the exercise of pastoral discipline. He is required by the

rule, (Discipline, p. 21,) at the leaders' meeting, "to inform the minister of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reproved." With a view to this obligation, he is expected to observe narrowly their conduct, and to keep himself advised of their spiritual state.

Mr. Wesley says, when this arrangement was first suggested—"This is the thing—the very thing we have wanted so long. I called together all the leaders of the classes, (so we used to call them and their companies,) and desired that each would make a particular inquiry into the behaviour of those whom he saw weekly. They did so. Many disorderly walkers were detected. Some turned from the evil of their ways. Some were put away from us. Many saw it with fear, and rejoiced unto God with reverence.

"As soon as possible, the same method was used in London and all other places. Evil men were detected and reproved. They were borne with for a season. If they forsook their sins, we received them gladly; if they obstinately persisted therein, it was openly declared that they were not of us. The rest mourned and prayed for them, and yet rejoiced, that, as far as in us lay, the scandal was rolled away from the society."—*Works*, vol. v, p. 179.

According to present usage and rule, when circumstances require a disciplinary procedure against an individual, and the case is such as not to involve any heinous crime, or gross immorality, either the preacher or leader acts, in order to bring the matter to an issue: thus showing that the same work is proper to both, and that the office of either partakes of the same character.

“In cases of neglect of duties of any kind, imprudent conduct, indulging sinful tempers or words, the buying, selling, or using intoxicating liquors as a beverage, or disobedience to the order and discipline of the Church;—first, let private reproof be given by a preacher or leader; and if there be an acknowledgment of the fault, and proper humiliation, the person may be borne with. On a second offence, the preacher or leader may take one or two faithful friends. On a third offence, let the case be brought before the society,” &c.—*Discipline*, p. 92.

The leader is thus bound, by the obligations of his office, to assist the preacher in enforcing obedience to the rules of the Church, and in maintaining a wholesome discipline over its members, so that “no fellowship” shall be maintained with “them that walk disorderly.” It should be his care, however, not only to discharge this

duty, but to do it in the most becoming and proper manner. There is frequently such a want of good judgment and charity in the manner of doing these things, as greatly to enhance and aggravate every difficulty. The design of the office is thus frustrated, and the Church suffers in her most important interests. Everything like an imperious exercise of authority in such cases should be avoided, while, at the same time, in a spirit of tenderness, and "not as being lords over God's heritage," we should aim at a fearless performance of our duty, in view of a responsibility of which we cannot divest ourselves. With this view we are to "bear with the infirmities of the weak," and avoid unjustly censuring them. We should eschew unfounded presumptions, and beware of placing too much reliance upon the lips of fame. It becomes the duty of the class-leader to use all prudent and proper means for the detection of gross immorality, or "easily besetting sins;" but when the offender is known, he is to be rebuked and exhorted "with all long-suffering." (2 Tim. iv, 2.) "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. vi, 1, 2.) No

extreme measures should be taken, without an attempt beforehand to reform the transgressor ; and such effort should be accompanied with earnest and anxious prayer. But if, after a course of prudent and plain dealing, the offender remain incorrigible, then, as a last resort, the minister should be made acquainted with the case. But there is no necessity, in ordinary cases, that he should be called to act, when such necessity, with much accompanying difficulty and agitation, may be avoided by a proper course on the part of the leader. These suggestions will not be undervalued by those who have a tender regard for the members of their class, and who desire to acquit themselves in a way that shall most honour the chief Shepherd of souls, and best promote his cause.

The chief responsibility in the exercise of discipline, devolves, of course, upon the preacher in charge. There is no transfer of his obligations to the leader, and the leader cannot control his administration ; but he is called upon to render that aid which may be in his power towards an equitable performance, in this respect, of the pastoral functions. This it is important to keep in mind, while the leading idea of the section is retained.

4. As exercising a pastoral oversight, the

leader is "to see each person in his class once a week, at least ; in order,

" 1. To inquire how their souls prosper.

" 2. To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require."—*Discipline*, p. 20.

This work is of a pastoral character. If "perfecting the saints, and edifying of the body of Christ," are the designs of a gospel ministry, and if, according to the Apostle, (Eph. iv, 11, 12,) "pastors and teachers" were given for this purpose, then, whoever aids in the promotion of this object, is to be considered as an auxiliary in the pastoral work. So far then is the class-leader a pastor.

Mr. Wesley asks in the large Minutes, "What is the office of a Christian minister?"

"*Ans.* To watch over souls, as he that must give account."

The leader has souls under his care, over whom he is required "to watch," as one "that must give account" to God and the Church. Herein he assists the minister in *his own* work. For this purpose he as regularly meets his class, administering to their spiritual necessities, as the preacher in a more public and general manner dispenses Divine truth to the multitude from the sacred desk. And he *watches* over these souls in a more particular manner than the minister is

able to do, because the number under his care is much less, and may more easily be attended to. "Every one" is here inquired of, and "every one" receives the *advice, comfort, reproof, or exhortation, which the occasion may require*. To be sure, there are some leaders who seem to do but little pastoral work. But there are some ministers also, who are equally delinquent in performing this part of their duty. And the one is no more divested of his proper character, on account of this neglect, than the other. Pastors, differing in this respect, are to be found both among preachers and leaders; but the leader who answers the design of his appointment, is true to his post and duty; and, as an under shepherd, will look well after the sheep of his flock.

On this rule, Mr. Wesley remarks:—"At first, they (the leaders) visited each person at his own house; but this was soon found not so expedient. And that on many accounts: (1.) It took up more time than most of the leaders had to spare. (2.) Many persons lived with masters, mistresses, or relations, who would not suffer them to be thus visited. (3.) At the houses of those who were not so averse, they often had no opportunity of speaking to them but in company. And this did not at all answer the end proposed,

of exhorting, comforting, or reproving. (4.) It frequently happened that what one affirmed, another denied. And this could not be cleared up without seeing them together. (5.) Little misunderstandings and quarrels of various kinds frequently arose among relations or neighbours : effectually to remove which, it was necessary to see them all face to face. Upon all these considerations, it was agreed that those of each class should all meet together. And by this means a more full inquiry was made into the behaviour of each person. Those who could not be visited at home, or no otherwise than in company, had the same advantage with others. Advice or reproof was given as need required, quarrels made up, misunderstandings removed ; and after an hour or two spent in this labour of love, they concluded with prayer and thanksgiving."—*Works*, vol. v, pp. 179, 180.

All this, without a distinctive name, shows the nature of the office which is filled by a leader.

5. A proper performance of his work implies, not only that the leader is punctual in meeting his class at the appointed time and place, but that he also exercises a pastoral supervision over those who from various causes may be absent.

Distance, important business, family circumstances, bodily sickness, or religious declension

may, according to the nature of the case, occasion such absence. But, surely, if the leader have the charge of these souls, he cannot properly discharge his duty toward them, and answer to his own conscience, while neglecting to inquire after them, and to take those measures required of him as their spiritual guide, to promote their spiritual interests. The design of his appointment, the general character of his office, the drift and direction of all the rules which appertain to his conduct, if they do not specifically require, do certainly, by implication, suppose that this duty is obligatory upon him. How can he exercise a pastoral care, and how can he *watch over* these souls, if he never takes the trouble to inquire after them, and to search them out, when, through either of the above causes, they are absent from class? What kind of a shepherd would he be who never numbered the sheep of his fold, and who, indifferent to the safety of his flock, would rather have it thinned and diminished, through repeated losses, than to exercise the necessary vigilance and industry for the prevention of such misfortunes? Such a shepherd would not be worthy of the name. "The leader is expected to visit the members of his class at their own houses, especially when they are sick or confined, as often as his circum-

stances will admit."—*Bishop's Notes to Discipline*.

It may be alleged that this would take up more time than we could reasonably expect men, who have their secular avocations to attend to, to devote to this service. But the old adage,—“where there is a will, there is a way,” will hold good in this case. By pursuing a proper course, the absentees will not be so numerous but what, with occasional visits, (which may be made in the intervals of business,) and words of counsel, dropped now and then by the way-side, as you may chance to meet them, every case may be met, and the satisfaction be enjoyed of having discharged an imperious duty,

Although this is a common-sense view of the subject, and in accordance with our general rules, it does not, I am sorry to say, indicate the general character of our leaders. Perhaps where there is this unwavering official fidelity, the case constitutes an exception, rather than otherwise, to what more generally obtains. A large number of leaders, if our opportunities for observation have been worth anything, seem to satisfy themselves by simply meeting those of their members who are present in the class-room, without giving themselves any concern for those who are absent. And such absentees are seldom

if ever favoured with a pastoral visit, the design of which is, "to inquire how their souls prosper," except it be by the preacher of the station or circuit. That there are worthy and indefatigable men, who faithfully discharge this duty, must be admitted, but we are now stating what is more generally the case. These things ought not so to be. "The very thing" (as Mr. Wesley termed it) designed by class-meetings is thus lost sight of. The frequent counsel and admonition, the constant pastoral care, so much needed, and to provide for which this office was instituted, becomes a thing that *was*. As well have no leaders. The duty we speak of is too important to be thus neglected by him who has voluntarily, at the call of the preacher in charge, assumed this office. "Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people." (Isa. lvii, 14.)

On this point, as it is a very important one, I beg leave to add a quotation from Fish's Manual for Class-leaders :—"In many instances where leaders neglect their absentees, we fear the will is wanting. To my certain knowledge, there are many leaders who never go after their absent members ; or, if they do, it is very, very seldom. If their members come to class, well ; and if they do not, there is no concern manifested. I have

known several instances of members having been absent from class for a quarter of a year in succession ; and when the minister at the quarterly visitation has asked the reason of this, the leader **has not** been able to give one, and has reluctantly acknowledged that **he has had no interview** with the parties during this period. Such leaders, I hesitate not to affirm, have lost the spirit of their office. The loss which the Methodist connexion sustains from this cause alone is incalculable. Many, through a variety of causes, become careless and negligent, or they fall into temptation, or they get a little involved in their temporal circumstances, and become remiss in their attention to Christian communion, and because they are not sought after, they go back again into the world, and have no more place among us. Hundreds, if not thousands, of members are sacrificed annually, because they are not visited when they begin to absent themselves from class. You, as a leader, ought to feel this, and ought to ask, 'Am I implicated? Have any been lost through my negligence?' I admit you are much engaged in your worldly calling, and have but little time which you can devote to this purpose ; but, notwithstanding this, you might, if you were so disposed, so arrange matters as to see all the members to whom you can have ac-

cess, according to rule. And here allow me to ask, Do you not spend more time (perhaps much more time) every week in ease and self-indulgence, or in trifling, or in doing nothing, than it would take to visit the absent members of your class? Does not your neglect more frequently arise from want of disposition, or want of zeal, or want of love to souls, than want of time? Have you not very often an uneasy mind respecting this? Does not conscience frequently reprove and condemn you? And might not these inward conflicts and painful feelings be brought to an end by taking up your cross, and doing that which would greatly tend to promote the good of souls, the welfare of the Church, and the glory of God—by going to see your members, when your members do not come to see you? Be no party to the loss of the connexion, and the declension of the Church.”—Pp. 89, 90.

6. Another duty of the leader, indicating the pastoral character of his office, is at the leaders' meeting, “To inform the minister of any that are sick.”—*Discipline*, p. 21.

It is supposed, that in the care which he has exercised over his flock, he has searched out these lame ones, and, for an increased amount of attention, refers them to the chief pastor of the Church. “In seasons of affliction, whether

personal or domestic, the people of your charge will need additional comfort and encouragement; and they will, as a matter of course, expect to see you. Never let them be disappointed. Never let them have to complain, and say, 'I have been ill, confined to my bed or house for some weeks, and my leader has never visited me.' Go to them when they are afflicted, and if they are broken, try to bind them up; and if they are distressed, comfort them; and if they are beset by the enemy of souls, endeavour to break the snare; and pray for them, that they may be healed. Remember, it is written, 'The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.' (James v, 15.) Let them so share in your sympathy, as to be afflicted, in some degree, like the Saviour, in all their afflictions."—*Fish's Manual*.

7. If sufficient has been said to establish the pastoral character of the leader's office, then it follows, as a necessary consequence, that the leader should be foremost in all the means and arrangements which are designed for the religious profit and improvement of the Church generally.

The class is a part of the Church, and must, as a general thing, share in the prosperous or

adverse state of things that may prevail. Hence, whatever affects, in any way, the interests of the Church, must also, in the same manner, affect the individual class. Hence the prominence and zeal which is expected from the leader in all the enterprises and movements of the Church. In the love-feast, the general band or fellowship-meeting, and in the prayer-meeting, he should be present, and is regarded as the proper person to take an active part, and a general lead on such occasions. His task is not accomplished by simply meeting his class. His example in the respect named, and the influence he thereby exerts upon the members of his class, in common with the Church generally, are of too great importance to be overlooked. If, therefore, he has a pastor's heart, and realizes to their full extent the obligations that devolve upon him, he will be found in punctual attendance upon these general means of grace. Many leaders, however, act in a very different manner. They are seldom found at the prayer-meeting, and other social gatherings, contributing, by their presence and fervour, to the interest and profit of the exercises; and their example is, in too many cases, followed by those of whom they have the particular charge; so that instead of leading them to the "green pastures," they are suffered to

stray in barren fields, where no food can be found for the soul. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among us, and many sleep." (1 Cor. xi, 30.) Now nothing can be plainer, than that the leader who acts thus, neglects a very obvious duty, and is recreant to those most solemn responsibilities which appertain to his position in the Church of God. The flock will follow where the shepherd leads them; and for them to flourish in the highest degree, they must be guided where they "shall be fed with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock." (Ps. lxxxi, 16.)

8. Sustaining this relation to the members of his class, and feeling this interest in their welfare, the leader should not neglect to pray for them.

Hereby his interest in the spiritual prosperity of his charge will be fed and maintained, while, at the same time, he may reasonably look for a corresponding answer to his petitions, in the spiritual growth and advancement of his members. And if his feelings are what they should be, this duty will be performed without a prompter. His burden of responsibility, his affectionate attachment to the members of his class, and his ardent desire for their progress in Christian holiness, will induce frequent and fervent in-

tercessions in their behalf at the throne of grace.* In reference to them, he will be able to adopt the language of the Apostle:—"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." (Eph. iii, 14-19.)

9. We may here very properly consider the variety of characters the leader has to deal with while sustaining this relation to the Church: and thus will it be further shown, that his office is pastoral in its character.

* It is related (in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine) of the late Mr. Bealey, of Radcliffe, near Bury, Lancashire, that "on the evening on which he met his class, it was his custom previously to spend an hour in retirement, that he might have opportunity for self-examination, and *intercession for the members*. Often have individuals of his family, when walking in the garden, unperceived by him, observed him on his knees in his chamber, in fervent prayer, with his eyes and one hand lifted up to heaven, whilst the other held the list of those for whom he prayed."

If he would understand how to apply his efforts in the best manner, and the elements of that spiritual criticism, on the judicious application of which, his success in a great measure depends, it is necessary that he should be familiar with the different phases of religious experience, as presented to view among the members of his class. Otherwise his instructions will be chiefly guess-work, of uncertain and doubtful application; while his want of success causes him to mourn, and the greater prosperity of others excites in his mind a wonder that they have so much the advantage over him.

Our classes are composed, for the most part, of seekers and professors of religion; and both these classes consist of persons greatly varying in their views of truth, and in their religious experience.

Among seekers, we find,—

(1.) The half awakened: those upon whose minds Divine truth has made but a feeble impression, and who, convinced by their understanding and conscience that they are sinners, and need a Saviour, connect themselves with the people of God, without having very definite views of their own state, and without any fixed purposes as to their future course. These are to be further instructed in reference to their

guilt and danger, and to be confirmed in any good resolutions which they may have formed ; lest, “ when they have heard *the gospel*, they go forth, and the good seed sown in their hearts is choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and they bring no fruit to perfection.” (Luke viii, 14.)

(2.) The awakened : those whose consciences are fully aroused, and whose eyes are opened to see their lost and undone condition. They perceive the hideous deformity of their moral character reflected in the mirror of Divine truth,—they are made sensible of their aggravated guilt, and are appalled by the dangers which thicken around them. They find themselves at the base of the cloud-capt mountain, enveloped in flames and smoke, while its terrific thunders are poured upon their ear. They have “ come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and to blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words.” (Heb. xii, 18, 19.) Under these circumstances, moved with the peril and misery of their state, they are heard to exclaim, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death.” (Rom. vii, 24.) Such are to be reminded of the deliverance which is had through “ Jesus Christ our Lord.”

(Verse 25.) The plan of salvation is to be explained in such a manner, that they will find no difficulty in perceiving the interest they have therein, and appropriating it to their comfort.

(3.) Among those who are thus awakened, many will be found eager to embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, while others will be more tardy and despairing. You will meet with some who are intellectual and refined, and with others who may be exceedingly illiterate. In some cases, you will find the child in the inquiring group, the interesting youth, the middle-aged, as well as the man of hoary head and of gray hairs. You will be called to counsel those of every gradation, as to rank and outward circumstances in life, and you will find that by these circumstances material variations have been produced in the mental and moral habits of such persons.

All these cases are to be met by appropriate truth. Every one requires, not general, but specific instruction; instruction adapted to his peculiar cast of mind, his former habits, his present connexions and circumstances in the world, and the mode or measure in which "the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared" unto him. It is evident that a very different course is required in some cases, from that which it would be proper to pursue in others. Some,

without any difficulty, comprehend the gospel plan, and immediately lay hold, by faith, of the Saviour, while others are a long time "hindered, through unbelief," from realizing their interest in the promises. Some minds have been familiar with evangelical truth from an early period of life, while others, in gross ignorance of all that appertains to the atonement of the cross, come, inquiring, "What must we do to be saved?" The leader then should be ready for all these cases, as they may occur.

But the great bulk of those composing our classes, are such as profess religion. These also are to be dealt with according to the various aspects under which their experience may be presented to view. You are to "give to each their portion in due season," being always careful that your instructions shall correspond with the religious character and circumstances of every one. Some require a knowledge of the "first principles of the doctrine of Christ," and others need to be urged to "go on to perfection." (Heb. vi, 1.) Some require to be fed "with milk," and others with "strong meat," being "of full age," and "by reason of use having their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. v, 13, 14.) Let us consider these different orders of Christian professors.

(1.) And first, we notice those who have been recently converted. They need to be made acquainted with the obligations of the new character which they have assumed. It is perfectly in place, and required by your relation to them, that you should take suitable opportunities to instruct them in reference to the nature and obligation of Christian baptism; that you should explain to them the import of the Lord's supper, and their duty of participating therein; and that you should lead the way to the performance of every other duty devolving upon them. They are inexperienced in most that concerns a religious life. They are "babes in Christ." Their preconceived views of Christian experience are likely to be disappointed. The conflicts and trials to which they are liable, may prove, perhaps, to be more protracted and severe than has been anticipated, if an entire exemption therefrom has not been expected. They are, consequently, liable to temptation on this account. The fiery darts of the enemy annoy and harass them. They therefore need a counsellor and friend,—such a one as will lead them along step by step, as they may be able to bear it, neither too fast nor too slow, but so as to ensure steady and increasing progress in Divine knowledge and enjoyment. The first symptom of a

wavering mind is to be detected, any moral delinquency which exists is to be pointed out, all Scriptural motives calculated to produce fidelity in the performance of duty are to be urged, and the greatest diligence and care employed to build them up in their "most holy faith," upon the "foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

(2.) You will also have under your care those of more mature experience, who have perhaps been long in a justified state. They have improved the light and grace of regeneration. They have maintained in themselves the witness of their adoption. Their names are written in heaven, and they feel persuaded that they are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." But further than this they have not gone. It is for you to show them the way to higher attainments, to urge them forward in the heavenly race, to insist upon the obligation they are under to be holy, to explain the promises, and enforce the commands bearing upon this point; that thus you may be able, when your work is complete, to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."*

* The following extract will illustrate the duty of leaders, in the particulars above noticed :—

"Formerly, it was usual, in some societies, for the leaders to devote their first meeting in each quarter to spiritual conversation.

(3.) You will meet with some who are cold and formal in their exercises, and who give good evidence that they are strangers to experimental religion. However melancholy the fact, and

“On one of these occasions, at B——, in the year 1822, but few of the leaders were present, and there appeared but little inclination to speak. The late Rev. Henry Moore presided, and after a short pause, perceiving the disposition of the meeting, leaned forward on the table at which he was sitting, and in a familiar manner spoke to the following effect :—

“Christian experience commences, in some instances, by almost imperceptible degrees. Divine light beams upon the mind of an individual, and discovers to him that, without true religion, he cannot be happy. Under this conviction, he resolves upon a certain course, in which he hopes eventually to secure the object of his desires. He proposes to lead a new life, and makes various good resolutions, determining, however, to say nothing of his purposes, until he shall have been able to carry these resolutions into practice. But the more he strives to do this, the more he discovers of his proneness to sin, of his inability to please God, and of the wickedness of his heart, till at length his mind becomes so distressed, he can no longer conceal his convictions, and he begins earnestly to inquire what he must do to be saved.

“Amongst the Methodists, there are many who would understand his feelings, kindly take him by the hand, and conduct him to a class-meeting. There he would learn the simple way of salvation, and the willingness of Christ to receive the true penitent; and when an individual is thus broken *for* sin, and *from* sin, it is astonishing with what readiness and power he receives the message that Christ died for his salvation. In most cases, immediately the penitent believes he is filled with unutterable joy. His ecstasy

however much we may deplore it, such persons are to be found in every Christian Church ; and it cannot be denied, that their influence is frigid and chilling whenever it is felt. These persons

is so great, that he is led to conclude that the work in him is at once complete ; that he has not only become a child of God, but must ever remain so ; that his hill is already so strong, it will never be moved.

“These thoughts, however, are not from God, for they are delusive, and lead to unwatchfulness. Of this his spiritual enemy is ready to take an early advantage ; and finding him off his guard, presents a temptation for which he is not prepared. As might be expected, he is easily overcome, and is now distressed beyond measure, and filled with confusion of face. Ashamed to lift his head, he shuns the society of his Christian companions, especially the happy social means in which he obtained reconciliation with God, and experienced so much joy ; and, in all probability, unless the leader, or some pious friend, seek and invite him to return, he will find a growing aversion to these spiritual means. ‘Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.’ We are thus taught not to abandon, but to follow the sinner, and encourage him again to seek for mercy. At length, if prevailed on to return, he becomes more penitent than ever. Again he is encouraged to look by faith to Christ, and again he is reconciled. Again he rejoices—but now it is with trembling—for he not only sees that his fall might have proved his utter ruin, but he has thereby acquired a better knowledge of himself, and of the devices of Satan. He is convinced that he is not beyond the reach of his enemy, as he was ready to imagine, but that he is still liable to be tempted ; and has learned, by painful experience, that it is

may have the externals of religion, they may attend church, observe the sacraments, and be regular in meeting their class. The morality of their conduct is perhaps unexceptionable, and they may do much, in a pecuniary way, for the maintenance of the Church and her benevolent institutions; but, at the same time, while perhaps they know it not, they are "wretched, and

possible to fall. Now made sensible of his danger, he endeavours to keep his heart with all diligence, but soon becomes concerned to find that when temptation is presented, there is in him a disposition to yield, if he might do so with impunity. He revolves the temptation in his mind, but the fear of grieving the Spirit, bringing himself into condemnation, and perhaps falling finally, causes him to start as from the brink of ruin, and to exclaim with one of old, 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' Looking up for Divine help, he resists the devil, and is preserved from falling.

"Here, then, it appears, that although he enjoys the forgiveness of sin, and the favour of God, there is still in him an *evil* heart, which, particularly when temptation is presented, is prone to depart from God.

"In this we discern the distinction between the merely justified believer, and one whose heart is purified by faith. When an individual believes with all his heart in the *cleansing* blood of Christ as availing for him, he obtains what we denominate 'full salvation,' a deliverance from this inbred sin, this inclination of the heart to side with temptation. Such a one may say with our Lord, 'Satan cometh, and hath nothing in me.' The fiery dart may be thrown, but it strikes as against a wall, it does not fix."—*Class-leader's Magazine*, (London,) pp. 6-9.

miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rom. iii, 17.) These nominal Christians are to be searched and weighed in the balance. It is your duty to present their obligations in a clear light, and, if possible, to arouse them from their lethargic stupor. You are to show them the danger of such a state, and the necessity of being truly born again, and of *agonizing* "to enter in at the strait gate."

(4.) The backslider also will come under your notice.

All who experience pardon do not retain it. Through the power of temptation, and a neglect to exercise the necessary vigilance, or by the neglect of some duty, or the commission of some sin, their evidence becomes clouded, and the witness of their gracious state finally lost, so that they are in imminent danger of "drawing back to perdition." And now they "deny the power of godliness," having nothing left but "the form." They become strangers to the joy, and triumph, and hope of the believer, and settle down in a state of false security, where uncertainty and gloom rest upon all the prospect of the soul. It is not always an easy matter to reach such a case, and effect the restoration which is needed. But if you would avoid the prevalence of a most deadly influence among the members of your

class, and prevent those consequences to the Church generally, which prove a source of pious grief to all who "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," you must not think to satisfy yourselves with anything short of the most strenuous effort, for the purpose of removing this fatal contagion. And such effort will often find its reward in the most encouraging success, and you will have the honour and satisfaction of having reclaimed from error and apostasy the faithless ones for whom Christ died. This is an object worth your toil. And remember, this is your duty, as a shepherd of souls.

In many cases you may prevent entire apostasy, by discovering the first symptoms of religious declension, and by the use of proper means to arrest their further development. The first absence from class, or the neglect of the prayer-meeting and other means of grace, should be distinctly marked. Or when places of public amusement, and parties for social pleasure, are preferred to the communion of saints, you should be admonished that there is need of your friendly and judicious interference. Thus by being "jealous over them with a godly jealousy," you may induce them to "repent" and do their "first works," and prevent them from "treading under foot *the Son of God*, and counting the blood of the

to serve her interests, by the consistency and uniformity of their walk.

(7.) You will also be called "to succour them that are tempted."

The people of God have not only to "wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wicked-manifolks in high places." (Eph. vi, 12.) And some tresssing and subject to temptation. They be- and fears within, the hands of Satan "like wheat," warfare. Through these depression religion is greatly abated, and "the consolation of God are small with" them. They therefore need to be "rooted and grounded in love," to be "strengthened, stablished, settled." You are to build them up in Christ, and to exhort them as did Moses the children of Israel,—“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee, he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” (Deut. xxxi, 6.) Endeavour to settle them upon the rock, and to establish their goings "in the way everlasting." For this purpose, you are to withdraw their attention from themselves, and to fix it on Christ—on his all-sufficiency as a Redeemer—his faithfulness, and the immutability of his promises—on their duty

class, and prevent those consequences to the Church generally, which prove a source of pious grief to all who "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," you must not think to satisfy yourselves with anything short of the most strenuous effort, for the purpose of removing this fatal contagion. And such effort will often find its reward in the most encouraging success, and you will have the honour and satisfaction of ~~by~~ no reclaimed from error and apostasy ~~they~~ as to ones for whom Christ died. ~~These~~ included in worth your toil. ~~And~~ and seem at first to duty ~~and~~ much future usefulness in the Church of God. But their zeal is not always maintained in its primitive vigour. They "run well for a season," and then grow cold and distant, until by degrees they become estranged from Christ and his cause. And yet, by a prudent course, these persons may often be saved to the Church, and be made ornamental and useful members. By gently repressing their forwardness, and giving the kind of instruction which is needed, as to their proper place and incumbent duties, they will be controlled as by a guiding rein, their minds will be prepared for temptation; and instead of "enduring *only* for a little while," they may become permanently attached to the Church, and be made effectually

to serve her interests, by the consistency and uniformity of their walk.

(7.) You will also be called "to succour them that are tempted."

The people of God have not only to "wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. vi, 12.) And some are peculiarly subject to temptation. They become "sifted" in the hands of Satan "like wheat," and are, at times, inclined to great depression and discouragement. Under these circumstances they look to you for assistance and counsel. That they may "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," you are to exhort them to "put on the whole armour of God," and to "stand, having *their* loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and *their* feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; and, above all," that they take "the shield of faith, wherewith *they* shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked," and that they "take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching

thereunto with all perseverance." (Eph. vi, 13-18.) Remind them that He who is for them is more than all those who are against them, and that he "knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation;" that "there hath no temptation taken *them*, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer *them* to be tempted above that *they* are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that *they* may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x, 13.) Thus will you strengthen their hands in God, and keep the tempter at bay, leaving them triumphantly to sing,—

"Jesus' tremendous name
Puts all our foes to flight!
Jesus, the meek, the angry Lamb,
A Lion is in fight.
By all hell's host withstood,
We all hell's host o'erthrow;
And conquering them through Jesus' blood,
We on to conquer go."

(8.) Perhaps some under your care will be unsound in doctrine, or be disposed to "inveigh against our discipline."

Whenever such persons make themselves prominent, they are likely to be troublesome, if not of serious injury to the Church. It will require much grace and wisdom properly to treat with *them*. A headstrong and dogmatic, or an un

charitable spirit, should be eschewed, while, at the same time, the necessary degree of firmness should be maintained. Let it be known that your principles are fixed, and not to be unsettled by the controversies which, from time to time, may arise concerning church government, or Christian theology; and let it be equally well understood, that disputes of this character are not to take the place of more profitable discourse when the members of your class are assembled for Christian fellowship.

It is well, if possible, to arrest the spirit at its first manifestation. If this be not done, it may lead to the most disastrous results, while you are not aware of your mistake, until the Church is torn by a spirit of anarchy and division, which cannot, but with the greatest difficulty, be controlled. As leaders, your responsibility is here exceedingly great. Your position in the Church gives you a degree of influence which you would not otherwise possess. That influence, it is understood, you have pledged, for the maintenance, and not the overthrow of all that is peculiar in the doctrines, usages, and discipline of the Church. Disappoint not the confidence which has been reposed in your fidelity, or the expectations which have been cherished concerning your ability and disposition to control a

heterodox or schismatic spirit, as it may appear among the members of your charge.

I here beg leave to subjoin a brief extract from Wesley's Sermons:—

“O beware, I will not say of *forming*, but of *countenancing* or *abetting* any *parties* in a Christian society! Never encourage, much less cause, either by word or action, any division therein. In the nature of things, ‘there must be heresies [divisions] among you;’ but keep thyself pure, leave off contention before it be meddled with; shun the very beginning of strife. Meddle not with them that are given to dispute,—with them that love contention. I never knew that remark to fail:—‘He that loves to dispute, does not love God.’ Follow peace with all men, without which you cannot effectually follow holiness. Not only ‘seek peace,’ but ‘ensue it;’—if it seem to flee from you, pursue it nevertheless. ‘Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.’ Happy is he that attains the character of a peace-maker in the Church of God.”—*Sermon on Schism.*

(9.) You are expected to instruct those who are seeking the blessing of Christian holiness. Under proper tuition, it is not expected that your members will be content in a mere justified state? *But feeling the need of entire purity of heart,*

they will be eager to "leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on to perfection." They have received the word of exhortation from you, and are desirous to press forward in the divine life. And now they look to you for further instruction. You should be ready then to point them to the "blood which cleanseth from all unrighteousness," to explain the way of faith, and to bring the Saviour in all his completeness and sufficiency nigh unto them. You should drill yourself in this work, and become accustomed to all the habits of thought and feeling which it involves.

(10.) But some of your members have already entered this rest. Christ has been "made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The all-cleansing blood has been applied, a fulness of love possesses and absorbs their souls; and they "live not, but Christ liveth in them; and the life which they live, they live by the faith of the Son of God who loved them and gave himself for them." The experience of these holy souls is peculiar. They are led in a peculiar way, have peculiar views and enjoyments, and are subject to peculiar temptations. "*They* may be tempted to unbelief—to presumption—to the world with all its vanities, by all its greatness, honour, and

beauty—to spare *themselves*, and be not zealous overmuch—to anger, revenge, and every evil temper. *They* may sometimes be more tempted, sometimes less. *They* may be tempted for days and weeks, and powerfully tempted, so as to be in great heaviness, yea, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; so that all communion with God may appear to be broken off, and be led in the bitterness of *their* souls to exclaim, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ In all these respects, the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant greater than his lord.”—*Class-leader's Magazine*, (London.)

In all such cases you are the proper person to administer counsel and comfort, to establish them in all the will of God, and cause them to grow up in Christ, their living Head, in all things.

10. We should deem our task imperfectly accomplished, if we did not, before concluding this part of our work, dwell more at large upon the manner in which a class should be conducted, for the greatest spiritual profit of its members.

(1.) As preliminary to the performance of this duty, it is presumed that you are acquainted with all your members; that their names are not only on your class-books, but in your memories; that you know their places of residence, and

their occupations; with all other circumstances which are in any way connected with your duties as a leader, and the knowledge of which might aid you in the performance of them. It is indeed strange, that when questioned, (perhaps by the preacher just coming among you,) who such and such persons are belonging to your class, and where they reside, you should be totally unable to give any definite information concerning them. And yet such cases are by no means uncommon. This can never be construed into a conformity with our obligations as sub-pastors in the Church of Christ. I hesitate not to say, that such leaders are unworthy of their office, and the sooner they are dispossessed the better.

(2.) But it is your duty not only to know every one, but to "take heed" to every one; to feel the burden imposed upon you; to keep continually in mind the precious souls of your charge; to cherish towards them more than ordinary affection; and to take every opportunity of showing them attention, and giving them evidence of your care and love. Thus will you promote confidence, and strengthen your influence over them. And thus will they become attached to you as their leaders, and be ready to receive your instructions, esteeming you "very highly in love for *your* work's sake." And thus

also will they come to "delight in the excellent of the earth;" to greet, with eager joy, the hour when they may commune together in the class-room, and there tell, in their place, from time to time, "what great things the Lord hath done for *them*, and hath had mercy on *them*." A contrary course must lead to a very different result. Indeed, it is no great wonder, in many cases, that members neglect their class. We can expect nothing better, when leaders are remiss in so essential a point. Assiduous care and affection on the part of this officer, are necessary to ensure a faithful attention to duty by those of whom he has the charge.

(3.) It is necessary sometimes that you converse with your members in private. You cannot always enter into those minute inquiries, and elicit those minute explanations which may be requisite. Many circumstances of which you yourselves must be the judges, will render necessary such private interviews. And if you are anxious to do every duty in the best possible manner, you will not think it too much trouble to use such means for the benefit of your members, but "in season," as well as "out of season," will ply yourselves diligently, to render the service which every case requires. Otherwise your instructions will be of too general a character, to

be specifically adapted to every individual, and great spiritual loss, if not habitual delinquency, and final apostasy be the result.

(4.) But to come more particularly to the class-room, we would enjoin, first of all, a rigid punctuality in the commencement of exercises at the appointed time. "Never let your members have to wait for you; the feeling of suspense, and the spirit of impatience, and the fear of being disappointed, which this occasions, may prevent them from getting the good which they otherwise would do. Besides, if you are in the habit of being late, this will tend to make them so too. On the other hand, never wait for your members; commence at the time, if there be only one person present."—*Fish*, p. 74.

Some leaders are always behind the time, both in attending class and other religious meetings; and although good and faithful men in other respects, are not to be depended upon for a punctual meeting of their engagements. Such a habit is injurious to themselves, as well as to those interests which they are appointed to serve. Wipe off this stain, and let it be known that you are a minute man, always at your post in good time.

(5.) Let not your exercises be too long. "Seldom continue the service longer than one hour. Incalculable mischief is often done in families, by

keeping servants and others, whose relations are not at all religious, beyond that period. If you have a large number of members, teach them to express themselves in few words, and study brevity in your addresses to them. It is much better to send them away longing than loathing."

—*Fish*, p. 74.

This advice may easily be acted on, by laying aside the habit of desultory remark, which is so often indulged in, by diminishing the number of verses which are sung on such occasions, and by keeping strictly to the point in all your addresses and prayers. In this way nothing will be lost, but much gained to the real interests of your charge.

(6.) Remember that your members have come together for religious instruction. Everything, therefore, which conflicts with this end, should be, as much as possible, avoided. It is very grateful to our feelings, and in a certain degree perfectly proper, to indulge in such a strain of observation, and in such other exercises as are calculated to excite sensations of a joyous nature; and it is not by any means to be considered as inconsistent with the design of class-meetings, to inspire our members with joy and hope. But to attempt raising such feelings, without considering the spiritual state of those we address,

is an error of very serious magnitude. Things should not be put out of their place. We should take care how we expose ourselves to the denunciation of the prophet,—“They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.” (Jer. vi, 14.) And we should be equally careful not to wound, when the opposite process of healing is required. Where reproof, exhortation, expostulation, or comfort is needed, let it be administered in its place. Aim chiefly at individual application; and try to produce that devout thought, and self-examination, which will end in firm resolution, and lead to holiness of heart and life. Thus will those who come to you for the “bread of life,” go away, feeding upon the solid nutriment with which you have furnished them. To this end, again, it would be well to have regard to the domestic relations and family circumstances of your members. “Ascertain whether any of the members of your class, who are heads of families, neglect to assemble their household for the purpose of reading the Scripture and prayer. If any of them do, urge upon them attendance to this duty. Show them the reasonableness, and the propriety, and the benefit, direct and indirect, of so doing. Allow of no excuse. If the husband, because of the nature

of his worldly avocations, cannot always conduct family worship, let the wife, if she be a devout, God-fearing woman, act as his representative. If any plead the want of gifts, if they state they cannot pray in public extemporaneously, then recommend them to use a form. It would be better for them to read a form of prayer, than to have no family prayer at all. Tell them they cannot expect to have the blessing of Heaven, unless they thus act, and 'command their household after them.' For the sake of their children and domestics, and the credit of religion, as well as for the sake of their own reputation, see that a family altar is erected in the houses of all under your care."—*Fish*, p. 84.

Enjoin the cultivation of the domestic virtues, and the importance of exemplifying religion at home, as well as in the Church of God.

Again, in all your addresses, let commonplace and irrelevant expressions be avoided ; let things be put in a clear light ; make use of plain words ; make yourself an ape of no person ; let your mind be well stored with appropriate texts and phrases culled from the inspired volume ; be not too prosy and dull, nor too short and abrupt ; steer the middle course ; and above all, let your heart be well warmed with those truths which you may utter. What you like to see in

preachers and orators in general, practise yourself. Speak with deep feeling, and let the spontaneous utterances of a heart burning with Divine love tell to those you address, "how greatly you long after *them* in the bowels of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i, 8.) Let this feeling of interest and affection become habitual with you, and prompt you in the performance of all your duties, and you will "be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. ii, 15.)

(7.) In closing this section, "let me observe, it devolves upon you, *not only to keep together the number of members which you have, but to increase their number.* The increase or decrease of members in our churches does not altogether depend upon the success of the word, as ministered by the servants of Christ; it depends much, very much, on the activity and efficiency of class-leaders. For there are numbers, however they may be impressed under the word, who never think of meeting in class, and joining the Church, until they are invited to do so. Some seriously-disposed persons wait for an invitation for years, and do not get one. This, in a great measure, is the fault of class-leaders, or members. You ought to acquire the habit of observing the effects of the gospel on those who

are not connected with the Church, and of looking after those who appear to feel under it ; and you should say to them, ' We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you ; come thou with us, and we will do thee good ; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.' (Num. x, 29.) I am persuaded you could not pursue this course without having your efforts crowned with success. How is it that some leaders are constantly increasing the number of their members, and that their classes have so frequently to be divided ? The reason is plain : they live in the spirit of their office. When they go to the house of God, they observe persons who appear to be affected, and make inquiries respecting them. They try to persuade those whom they find to be religiously disposed, to save their souls, and find their way to heaven. They are bent upon enlarging the borders of Zion, and getting her converts multiplied. They cannot, they will not be satisfied without it ; and this is the secret of their prosperity. And, on the other hand, how is it that there are leaders, many of them gifted, good men, who scarcely ever get an increase to their classes ; nay, cannot keep the members which they have ? The cause of this is likewise obvious enough. They never bestir themselves. They

never move a step out of the way to bring a soul to Christ, to God, to heaven. If any of the members under their care die, or are removed, or apostatize, they make no effort to fill up the vacancies which are occasioned. They never seek those who appear to be lost, and never drive back those who have strayed. Such leaders as these, we fear, 'are at ease in Zion,' or they have 'lost their first love,' or, (if they ever possessed it,) the spirit of their office. At least, they have not that Christian zeal and enterprise by which they ought to be characterized. All leaders ought to consider themselves as so many recruiting officers in the service of the King of kings, and Lord of lords; and ought to be resolutely determined, in the strength of grace, to swell the ranks of the Captain of our salvation, with persons called and chosen; and to think no self-denial too great to practise, no cross too heavy to take up, no sacrifice too costly to make, and no difficulty too great to surmount, that this may be effected. O, if all the leaders in the *Methodist connexion* were heartily and zealously to co-operate with their ministers, through the length and breadth of the land, in endeavouring to bring persons wrought upon by a preached gospel within the pale of the Church, the most high God would soon make us, as a people, a

thousand fold more than we are, and bless us as he has promised. We should then hear no more respecting decrease ! The mouths of our enemies would be stopped, and their heads would be hidden !"—*Fish*, pp. 92-95.*

° The following, from the Class-leader's Magazine, presents a good example, which it would be well for our leaders in general to follow :—

" William Carvosso, as a class-leader, was deservedly held in the highest estimation. It was an office exactly to his taste ; and for the discharge of its duties he had qualifications of no common order. He is an instance of the wisdom of employing such a class of men, in gathering and building up the Church of God.

" Few men, however great their attainments in theology and divinity, could excel, or even equal him here. Within the sphere of the class-meeting, he was a wise master-builder ; and how eager inquiring souls were to profit by him in this means of grace, is well known to thousands. In many places, when it was known he was to meet a class, and the room admitted of it, crowds from other classes would come to listen to his deep experimental instructions, and to catch the fire of his spirit. His visit to a society was often regarded as a sort of era ; for the expectation of the people, and the fervour of his soul, when they met ' together in one place, with one accord,' often conspired to bring more than ordinary influence from above. He was never harsh in meeting a class, but he would blend great fidelity with fervent, melting compassion ; so that however close he came, he would rarely give offence.

" In an early part of my Christian life, I remember he once remarked to me, in reference to a member of his class, whose unsatisfactory conduct and experience had given him much pain, ' I can speak to him without much difficulty

In view of the foregoing considerations, it must be conceded, that an error has very generally prevailed in supposing that all the details of the

when I come to him with my own soul melting under the influence of heavenly love.' He considered the class-meeting a spiritual fold, into which every soul who had a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from sin, should at once be conducted; because he knew, from facts almost innumerable, that within the boundary of this infinitely important means of salvation, holy desires and resolutions were more happily nourished, defended, and strengthened, than they could be elsewhere. A class-meeting was used by him as a grand instrument to promote decision of religious principle; and the good which he did in this way is beyond calculation. Here I can speak with confidence, for I speak from experience. The kind purpose, and the constraining love which he used, to get me to the class-meeting, was little short of compulsion. I could not get out of his hands. It is right, perhaps I should say, I was not at this time what is termed immoral in my conduct; but of the immediate stirring of the Spirit's influences upon my own mind, I was then as unconscious as I had been for many years before. Yet such was the effect of my being brought within the hallowing bounds of the assembly of the saints, that before the lapse of twenty-four hours, I was quite decided in pursuit of the religion of the heart. I make this reference to my own case, to show the importance of parents, and class-leaders, and all members of the Church of God, using their utmost personal influence to bring every hopeful subject under the salutary discipline and influence of Christian communion. From this mode of augmenting the number of our members, there is no danger of lowering the tone of experimental or practical piety, while leaders discharge their duty to all such as place themselves under their care.

pastoral work devolve upon the minister. Leaders and ministers have, to a considerable extent, but one work to do. They both sustain a pastoral relation to the flock of Christ. "Every leader is, in some degree, a gospel minister."—*Bishop's Notes to Discipline*. He is not called to preach the word publicly, or to dispense the sacraments, but he should be impressed, (in view of the work he has to do,) in a very similar manner as those are who take upon them "this office and ministry." The responsibility and magnitude of the work to which he is called, should ever rest with appropriate weight upon his heart and conscience, and prompt him to that fervour and diligence which are indispensable to the proper discharge of his duties. This view cannot be too strenuously insisted on; because some who occupy this office, seem to think very lightly of their position, and to be very negligent of its duties. A voice needs to be raised, that by "a certain sound" they may "come to a knowledge of the truth" in this particular. If the minister of Christ "watches over souls," so does the class-leader. It is his special office to instruct the ignorant, to direct the penitent to Christ, to build up the believer, to confirm the minds of the wavering, to strengthen the weak, to warn the unruly, to reclaim the delinquent and back-

slidden, to rebuke error, to detect the hypocrite, to resolve cases of conscience, and to give advice and sympathy, and, as far as practicable, assistance in cases of embarrassment and misfortune—all of which presuppose a pastoral character.

There are different grades of office among us; from the ordained ministry, down to those, who, as stewards and trustees, take charge of the temporalities of the Church. And while we would not disparage the incumbents of the last named offices, it is not too much to say, that the leaders, in their pastoral character, are of the first importance in our economy, and inferior only to those who *preach the gospel*.

This is not then a mere post of honour, but one of responsibility and labour. It is an office from which we look for the highest and most beneficial results. The piety of our members in general, and the prosperity of the Church, depend very much upon the efficiency with which those who occupy this position discharge their duties. "To the minister is committed the general exposition and declaration of the truth, and to the class-leader its private application and more personal enforcement. 'No public ministrations,' says a well-known and acknowledged authority on this subject, 'will be suffi

cient to maintain the life of religion in individuals, or to preserve the purity of the body without faithful leaders.' The Wesleyan class-meeting, as a means of grace, has been greatly honoured by God in the instruction and encouragement of penitent seekers of salvation, and in the edification of believers. 'When the leader is properly qualified, its utility has been found to exceed everything which has been advanced in its favour. It is not the limit of a small treatise, but a life of experience, that can adequately acquaint us with all its excellence and worth.' If the leader be a person of piety and zeal, his office opens before him a field of great usefulness, and his class will prosper; but if the contrary be the case, the members will be irregular in their attendance, and their meetings will be cold and formal. If he is content to *rest* in sins forgiven, or to live a little *below* his privilege, they will be the same. But if he is one who, like Enoch, walks with God, a man of tried experience, he will bring out of his treasury things new and old, the people will be edified, and, instead of seeking frivolous excuses for absence, will regard the opportunity as a high privilege, and one of their greatest helps in the Divine life, and manifest their delight therein by a regular and punctual attendance, the effect of which will appear

in the production of a deeper and more pervading piety.”—*Class-leader’s Magazine*.

In a similar strain do our early bishops remark in their Notes to the Discipline:—“The office is of vast consequence. The revival of the work of God does, perhaps, depend as much upon *the whole body of leaders*, as it does upon *the whole body of preachers*. We have almost constantly observed, that when a leader is careless, or dull, or inactive — when he has not abilities or zeal sufficient to reprove with courage, though with gentleness, and to press a present salvation upon the hearts of the sincere—the class is, in general, languid ; but, on the contrary, when the leader is much alive to God, and faithful in his office, the class is also, in general, lively and spiritual. This arises from the nature of the Christian plan of salvation. It is the same, in general, with a minister and his flock ; and every leader, as we have before intimated, is, *in some degree*, a gospel minister ; though we may add, that among us a spiritual body of leaders may counteract the otherwise pernicious consequences of a languid ministry. Our leaders, under God, are the sinews of our society, and our revivals will ever, in a great measure, rise or fall with them.”

SECTION II.

Financial Duties of the Leader.

1. Leaders were appointed, and classes formed at first, "merely on a temporal account."

"It was agreed that, 1. Every member of the society that was able should contribute a penny a week. 2. That the whole society should be divided into little companies or classes, about twelve in each class; and 3. That one person in each should receive that contribution of the rest, and bring it in to the stewards weekly. Thus began that excellent institution from which we reaped so many spiritual blessings."—*Wesley's Works*, vol. vii, p. 350.

2. The financial character of the leader's office will appear from the rule, now in operation, which makes it his duty "to receive what" his members "are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, Church, and poor;" and, at the leaders' meeting, "to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding."—*Discipline*, pp. 20, 21.

In changing somewhat the primary character of the office, and making it subserve the spiritual interests of the Church, it has not by any means dropped its original design.

It is still the duty of leaders to receive from

their members "what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers."

If they have accepted the call of the minister, to assist him, as we have all along supposed, in his pastoral work, and if they would so act their part as most effectually to accomplish this design, then are they called upon to relieve him, as far as they are able, from pecuniary embarrassment; especially, as this was one design of their appointment. They are expected to sympathize with the preacher in all that affects his ministerial standing and usefulness. And it is well known, that if his temporal circumstances are such as to embarrass him, and his family are not provided for as their wants require, it seriously interferes with that freedom and independence of mind which are essential to a successful prosecution of his work; so that these inferior interests are to be attended to, as subservient to the higher and more important concerns of his calling. The desire of the class-leader to realize that which is of most value, will guard him from all negligence and inattention to that which is so necessary and indispensable as a means.

The itinerant minister has devoted himself exclusively to the work of his calling, and it is desirable that no worldly cares should interfere

with his evangelical aims and purposes. This separation from secular pursuits is made imperative. Our ministers are required, as in most cases they feel it to be their duty, to give themselves wholly to this work. In this respect they feel the force of the apostle's direction to Timothy:—"Thou, therefore, endure hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." (2 Tim. ii, 3, 4.) The study and thought necessary to make a man an able minister of the New Testament, "a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, and bringing out of his treasury things new and old," are not altogether consistent with worldly cares. If he would be a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," he must consecrate his entire, his most mature and vigorous energies to this work. But if he does this, it is necessary that others should care for his temporal wants. In confidence that the Church will not neglect him in this respect, he has relinquished all the ordinary means of helping himself; that, thus disentangled from worldly concerns, he may be able to serve Christ and the Church in the most effectual manner.

But it is also according to the design of God,

that the Church should support those who minister to them in word and doctrine. Express provision was made, under the Jewish dispensation, for the support of the priesthood, they not being allowed to engage in worldly pursuits:—"And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thy inheritance among the children of Israel. And behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." (Numbers xviii, 20, 21.) The same principle is designed to apply under the gospel. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that plougheth, should plough in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto

you spiritual things, is it a great thing that we should reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple, and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (1 Cor. ix, 7-14.) Again,—“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” And this duty is enforced by the most cogent and serious reasons,—“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” (Gal. vi, 6-10.)

It is just and equitable that ministers should be supported by the Church. If we engage a person in our service, we expect to remunerate

him for his time and labour. We calculate on receiving nothing from those who are engaged in trade or merchandize, without giving an equivalent in return. And are we to lose sight of this most equitable principle in our transactions with those who are serving our highest interests, when we are compelled to its most rigorous observance, in those of our dealings with mankind which affect the inferior concerns of life? Is it the greater value of those services which are rendered us by the ministry, and the superior motives by which they are influenced, that justifies us in neglecting to contribute to their support? Or does the superior character of the ministry raise them above the common wants of mankind? It should be borne in mind, that like all others, they are men, and but men; and that they are engaged in a work that contemplates the improvement and salvation of our spiritual and immortal being. In prosecuting this work, they have thrown themselves, with a generous confidence, upon the justice and integrity of the Church; depending for their temporal support upon their voluntary contributions. And now can we be indifferent to our obligations, and to all sense of honour, and treat the claims of these men with criminal neglect? Honour, gratitude, interest, and duty—all say no! Let

me remind you then again, that if this duty is to be performed, its superintendence and direction devolve, by law, and voluntary acceptance, upon the leader.

This work depends principally upon the leaders. The steward is an important officer, and if he does his duty, materially contributes to the financial strength of the Church, and to the facility and punctuality with which its indebtedness to the ministry is discharged ; but his sphere of duty is limited, and has its own peculiarities. He cannot supply the place of the leader. If he be negligent of the finances of his class, the preacher must suffer serious embarrassment, and the Church fail to sustain its wonted reputation and influence. And, on the other hand, he has everything to encourage him in the discharge of this duty. Methodism, from the commencement, has been sustained in this way ; and the most glorious revival of religion, through the general spread and application of its peculiar appliances, has been made to bless the world, and to cheer onward a militant and expectant Church. And the work is still progressing. Our host is extending itself, the victories of the cross multiply, and the prospect of still wider conquest encourages our hearts. But let us bear in mind. *that these results have not been attained un-*

sought. They have not been reached without the employment of adequate instrumentalities, and we should never lose sight of the means which has hitherto contributed to our prosperity, and upon which we are dependent for its increase and continuance.

There is no getting along without a system of finance. And no financial system works with such regularity and efficiency as that which involves the weekly class collections. Annual, or quarterly, or even monthly collections, will not compare therewith. In the first place, the amount contributed is comparatively small, and scarcely felt; while in the others, it is of greater consequence, and too generally parted with in a spirit of greater reluctance. And besides this, in the more extended intervals there will be many changes and removals, interfering with the collection of the larger dues, by which a material amount is lost to the Church, and extra effort made necessary to realize that amount in some other way. And this again puts both preachers and stewards to great inconvenience, causes a necessity, in many cases, of making public our deficiencies, increases the burdens of the more liberal, and casts a sort of opprobrium upon the general character of the Church. To this cause also, (without expressing an opinion as

to the thing itself,) we may trace the necessity by which, in many places, our people are driven to the practice of pewing and hiring the seats in their houses of worship.

Now a little effort on the part of the leader would obviate most of these difficulties, and place the Church in a much more pleasant, if not honourable, position. To give a small sum weekly, will seldom be felt to be a burden to your members. "And take care that you, as a leader, do not entertain any mistaken notions respecting the contributions of your members. If the Bible be true, to contribute to the support of their ministry is a direct benefit to them. It is a source of present and future good. Never be the subject of any misplaced sympathy, as it regards this. Remember the case of 'the poor widow,' who cast into the treasury 'all that she had, even all her living.' (Mark xii, 41.) Did the Saviour censure her for so doing? Did he say she ought to have kept it for her own necessities? No! He testified his approbation by passing the highest eulogy on her, by declaring she had done more than all her rich neighbours."—*Henry Fish.*

It is to be feared that all is not right here. We have sometimes thought that the delinquency of the leader, in these respects should be at-

tributed, in many cases, to his own parsimony. Reluctant to contribute himself, he is fearful lest his covetousness should find a just rebuke in those solicitations for the manifestation of a liberal spirit on the part of his members, which it is his duty to press. And hence his neglect of this important part of his duty.* Now wipe off this reproach. Stir yourself to diligence in this matter. Do not undervalue the small sums which you may collect from week to week. You

* In the Minutes of Conference for 1782, in which conference Mr. Wesley presided, there is the following question :—

“*Ques.* 32. The Scripture says, Not to keep company, ‘if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, with such an one, no, not to eat. And put away from among yourselves that wicked person.’ This is an express command, and it is of unspeakable importance. These *money-lovers* are the pest of every society. They have been the main cause of destroying every revival of religion. They will destroy us, if we do not put them away. But how shall we know them, without the miraculous discernment of spirits?

“*Ans.* 1. By their own confession. Tell any one alone, with all tenderness, ‘I am to give an account of your soul to God. Enable me to do it with joy. I am afraid you are covetous. Answer me a few questions, in order to remove that fear.’ 2. By their fruits. For instance: a man not worth a shilling enters our society. Yet he freely gives a penny a week. Five years after, he is worth scores of pounds. He gives a penny a week still. I must think this man covetous, unless he assures me he bestows his charity some other way. For every man is covetous, whose beneficence does not increase in the same proportion as his substance.”

will find the aggregate amount, which will be realized in this manner at the close of the year, will far exceed that which is obtained in any other way. Those little rills, which form the magnificent and flowing river, are not to be despised while we gaze upon the rushing tide, and are attracted by its majesty and beauty. Let the weekly class collections, though comparatively insignificant, be attended to with scrupulous fidelity, as necessary to the permanence of our institutions, and the progress of the gospel. Here is the true *multum in parvo* of our financial system.

3. The rule we comment on not only requires the leader to assist in raising supplies for the support of the gospel, but to receive contributions for "the Church and poor."

The clause "for the Church," had reference, doubtless, to the purpose for which classes were at first organized—as a means of liquidating "the debts of the society at Bristol." When the institution assumed a religious character, and came to be employed as a means of grace, this particular aspect of the thing was, in a great measure, dropped. So far as the author can learn, the practice never obtained very generally of taking regular class collections for the *payment of Church debts*, although during the early

history of Methodism, it prevailed to some considerable extent.

The leader is also required "to receive what" the members of his class "are willing to give toward the relief of the poor." "The poor ye have with you always," says Christ; and it is doubtless our duty tenderly to care for them, and supply their wants. Mr. Wesley took a special care of this class, and frequently solicited contributions in their behalf. In order to systematize the benevolence of the societies, he inserted this clause in the general rules; and wherever the classes are disposed thus to relieve the necessitous and distressed, they make the leaders the recipients of their bounty, and it becomes dispensed by the stewards of the Church. More generally, however, collections are taken up for this object on sacramental occasions, and through societies organized for this special purpose, the same end being reached, although in a little different manner from that contemplated in this rule.

That the rule spoken of is to be somewhat qualified in its application, will appear from the note appended to it in our Book of Discipline:— "This part refers to towns and cities, where the poor are generally numerous, and Church *expenses considerable.*" But that occasion is taken,

by the license here given, too generally to neglect the class of persons in question, cannot be denied. Some better system than that which has hitherto obtained, seems to be yet a desideratum among us. The poor are often among the most worthy of our members, and deserving of the highest consideration and esteem. But they are frequently lost to our Church, by an inexcusable negligence in attending to their wants; while a greater degree of care and liberality on the part of other denominations, less evangelical in many cases than our own, secures, not only their good will, but frequently their relation and influence as church-members. This observation, we apprehend, will hold good in reference to our Church generally; but its most lucid proof is to be found in many of our country charges, where a variety of conflicting interests exist, attaching to the different evangelical churches. It would be well for us, if we were, in all cases, equally active with our sister denominations, in this department of Christian benevolence. It is admitted that our ability is not always equal to theirs, and that we may exert ourselves in vain to compete with them in this respect; but with a proper system, we could do what might be necessary in behalf, at least, of our own members, and thereby save them to the Church, and

acquit ourselves in the performance of an important duty.

4. There is another object closely allied to the foregoing, for which weekly collections in the classes are to be taken, and which is expected to receive the countenance and support of the leader. The preachers in charge are "to appoint, in every class within their charges, a missionary collector, who shall keep a book, in which shall be enrolled the names of all the members of the class, and shall collect from each member, who may feel disposed so to contribute, at the rate of one cent per week, or fifty cents per year," (*see Discipline*, pp. 180, 181,) the sums so collected to be appropriated to the cause of missions. Thus an arrangement is made by which the *poor*, in different parts of the world, are furnished with the *bread of life*, while the necessary measures are taken at the same time to dispense *the bread that perisheth* to those who are in want. Is it not a command resting upon the Church,—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature?” And has the Church done her duty in the fulfilment of this command? Is she urging on her host of labourers, as the whitening fields invite their approach? Is it not proper, that, occupying as *you do* so prominent a position within her

pale, you should zealously co-operate with those who are seeking to extend the conquests of the Redeemer? "Why has God opened the field before us, and whitened the harvest, if it be not that we should enter it, and gather the precious fruit? Is the duty of the Church ever limited by anything excepting her utmost ability? Can she meet her responsibilities without exhausting her resources? And who will say that she has done this by annually paying into the treasury the pitiful sum of twelve and a half cents per member?

"According to our last Minutes, we now number 662,315 members. If we were to average twenty-five cents a-piece, the sum would amount to \$165,578; and if we were to reach fifty cents, we should have \$331,157. And who doubts but that with proper efforts we might reach the latter sum the coming year? We are not among the doubters. We believe it might be done—and, what is more, we believe it *ought* to be done. If the money could confidently be calculated upon, the means of expending it, on promising fields, would soon be devised, and men for the occupancy of those fields would be found.

"The great want in carrying on the missionary *work* has always been located in the Treasury.

When the money has been at command, the field has been open, and the servants of God have stood forth, and said, *Here are we, send us.* ‘The harvest is great, and the labourers are few;’ but why? Not because ‘the Lord of the harvest’ has not provided them, but because God’s stewards have withheld the means to speed them on in the noble and glorious work of gathering in the sheaves. Through the want of an adequate idea of the real necessities of the world, and of a corresponding liberality, ‘the sinews of war’ have not been forthcoming, and hence our active forces in the field have been feeble and ill-furnished.

“It is so obvious, that we need not attempt to prove it, that our missionary contributions ought to be greatly increased. To say that this cannot be done, would be in the face of facts known and read of all men;—to say that it will not be done, would be a reflection upon the religion, the Christian feelings, of our people. And we are unwilling to believe that the Methodist people will be behind in their contributions, when they are fully made acquainted with their duty, and are promptly and earnestly addressed upon the subject.

“What we want is an active agency, which *will bring home to the people the obligation*

which rests upon them—one and all—to contribute to the missionary cause, and at the same time furnish them with the opportunity to make their contributions. They must understand that the work is not to be done by a few, but the obligation is universal; and that no one, to whom God has given the means, can excuse himself from the duty, without incurring a fearful responsibility. The voice of the millions who are perishing for want of the bread of life must be echoed in the ears of the masses—of all, rich and poor, high and low, old and young.”—*Christian Advocate and Journal*.

Now, if, while other officers in the Church are doing their part, the leaders would take hold of this work, and encourage the weekly missionary collections, how easily would the sum mentioned in the above extract be raised? You are expected, my brethren, to act in this matter in accordance with the obligations of your office. Do your utmost for the promotion of this most glorious enterprise, and the effects of your zeal will be felt, not only in the corresponding pulsations of those hearts to whom you minister, but in the raising and spreading of that glory which is to fill the whole earth, and attract the gaze of its wondering tribes.

5. We should not overlook in this connexion

the means which are directed to be used, for the purpose of "raising annual supplies for the propagation of the gospel, making up the allowance of the preachers, &c."—"Every preacher who has the charge of a circuit shall earnestly recommend to every class or society in his circuit to raise a quarterly or annual collection by voluntary contribution, or in such other way or manner as they may judge most expedient from time to time; and the moneys so collected shall be lodged with the steward or stewards of the circuit, to be brought or sent to the annual conference, with a regular account of the sums raised for this purpose in the classes or societies respectively."—*Discipline*, p. 171, sec. v, 1.

It is enacted again:—"Every annual conference has full liberty to adopt and recommend such plans and rules as to them may appear necessary the more effectually to raise supplies for the respective allowances. Each annual conference is authorized to raise a fund, if they judge it proper, subject to its own control, and under such regulations as their wisdom may direct, for the relief of the distressed travelling, superannuated, and supernumerary preachers, their wives, widows, and children."—*Discipline*, p. 174, sec. v, 6.

"It shall be the duty of each annual confer-

ence to take measures, from year to year, to raise moneys in every circuit or station within its bounds, for the relief of its necessitous superannuated, and supernumerary ministers, widows, and orphans."—*Discipline*, p. 174, sec. v, 7.

Some of the plans adopted in accordance with the last mentioned rules, as well as the more explicit provisions of the first, bring these collections into the classes, and of course calculate on the encouragement and co-operation of the leader. It is not necessary to repeat here the arguments which have been already adduced, in favour of supporting those who are effective labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, and which will hold equally good in reference to those who are breaking new ground, or labouring in other circumstances which prevent their receiving a sufficient support. The appeal of our Discipline should be kept in mind :—

“ How shall we send labourers into those parts where they are most of all wanted ? Many are willing to hear, but not to bear the expense. Nor can it as yet be expected of them. Stay till the word of God has touched their hearts, and then they will gladly provide for them that preach it. Does it not lie upon us, in the mean time, to supply their lack of service ? To raise *money* out of which, from time to time, that ex-

pense may be defrayed ? By this means, those who willingly offer themselves may travel through every part, whether there be societies or not, and stay wherever there is a call, without being burdensome to any. Thus may the gospel, in the life and power thereof, be spread from sea to sea. Which of you will not rejoice to throw in your mite to promote this glorious work ?

“ Besides this, in carrying on so large a work through the continent there are calls for money in various ways, and we must frequently be at a considerable expense, or the work must be at a full stop. Many, too, are the *occasional* distresses of our preachers, or their families, which require an immediate supply, otherwise their hands would hang down, if they were not constrained to depart from the work.

“ The money contributed will be brought to the ensuing conference.

“ Men and brethren, help ! Was there ever a call like this since you first heard the gospel sound ? Help to relieve your companions in the kingdom of Jesus, who are pressed above measure. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Help to send forth able and willing labourers into your Lord's harvest : so shall ye be assistants in saving souls from

death, and hiding a multitude of sins. Help to propagate the gospel of your salvation to the remotest corners of the earth, till the knowledge of our Lord shall cover the land as the waters cover the sea. So shall it appear to ourselves and all men, that we are indeed one body, united by one spirit ; so shall the baptized heathens be yet again constrained to say, ‘ See how these Christians love one another!’ ”—*Discipline*, pp. 172–3.

Now everything which can be said in favour of providing for those just mentioned, and much more, can be said in favour of a competent provision for those who have worn themselves out in this work, as well as for those who may be dependent upon them, or be left in dependent circumstances by them, when they shall have gone to receive their reward in the Church triumphant. “ And here I may be permitted to say, an object like this ‘ commends itself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.’ What can be more just, than that some provision should be made for your ministers, when, through sickness or old age, they are no longer capable of discharging their regular duties ? The Church, during the period they are capable of labour, only gives them what is requisite to supply their *present necessities* ; and, therefore, they cannot

lay up in store against the decline of life ; and many of them have but little or no private property ; what, then, is to become of them, when their health and strength fail, if there be no fund from which they can obtain assistance ? Are they to be left to breathe out a miserable existence—when, perhaps, they require additional comfort and support—in a state bordering on starvation ? Every principle and feeling of our holy religion say, No ! These men sacrificed all their worldly prospects (and the prospects of many of them were good) in early life, *at the call*, and for the service of the Church ; and common honesty, leaving everything nobler in Christianity out of the question, ought to lead those who have been benefitted by their ministry, to take care that they do not lack the necessities, not to say the comforts, of life, when they are laid aside by sickness or old age. The amount required from each individual, to preserve them from this state of things, is so small, that, taking the object contemplated into consideration, all reasonable persons would conclude, that every member, unless extremely poor indeed, would think it a privilege to contribute his quota, and would do it with pleasure.

* * * * *

“ *Can a man have ‘the love of God in him,’*

who 'shuts his bowels of compassion,' and withholds his contribution? Nay; can he be a just man who does? Wesleyan ministers enter into the service of the connexion with the expectation, that bread to eat, and raiment to put on, at least, will be provided for them; and they have a right to expect, if they continue in active service until worn out, that these will, to a certain extent, be provided for them to the end of their pilgrimage.

"You, as a leader, I am sure, will see the propriety and the necessity of this; and, therefore, will feel it to be your duty to co-operate in endeavouring to prevail upon the members of your class to do their part in this work of Christian justice and beneficence. . . . Much, very much, depends upon your exertions, and the exertions of your colleagues in office. If you and they feel no interest in this question, it is to be expected your members will not; if you care not what becomes of the ministers of Christ, who have been accustomed to feed your souls with the everlasting truth of God, when they are past service, it is not likely they will; but if they see you feel concerned, they will drink into your spirit, and do what is required of them with a ready mind and cheerful heart. Only bring the *case fairly before them*, and kindly ask for their

assistance, and the fund will be 'a memorial to all generations.'

"And now, while I am dwelling on pecuniary matters, as you are from time to time mixed up with the financial affairs of the Church, allow me to digress a little, and to offer a few remarks on the general question. They may occasionally serve to guide and direct you. There is as yet much practical infidelity in the Churches of God, as it respects Christian beneficence. It is not confined to rich or poor. It exists among all classes; and there are some such glaring exemplifications of it, that I cannot but conclude, that in these cases there is either much ignorance or much unbelief connected with them. I am free to admit, that there is no body of men in Christendom which, as a whole, gives so much, in proportion to their means, to charitable and ecclesiastical purposes, as the Wesleyan Methodists do; and yet many of them, in common with other professing Christians, act as if they did not believe many passages of Scripture which relate to the disposal of property. True it is, they profess to believe everything contained in the volume of revelation; but do they act on all occasions as if they so believed, especially as it respects giving? Take the following passages, *and consider them with prayerful attention:—*

‘Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine.’ (Prov. iii, 9, 10.) Now, I ask, who does this? Where are the men who ‘honour the Lord,’ both with their ‘substance’ and ‘the first-fruits of all their increase?’ If it were believed that, were they to do so, their ‘barns would be filled with plenty, and their presses burst out with new wine;’ in other words, they would have great temporal prosperity;—would not many do so who do not? They do not, therefore, because of unbelief.

“ ‘There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.’ (Prov. xi, 24.) Who believes this? Would not many ‘scatter’ much more than they are accustomed to do, if they believed they should increase by so doing? And would many ‘withhold’ in the manner they oft-times do, if they believed it tended to poverty? And yet God says it does; they do not, therefore, believe God.

“ ‘Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.’ (Luke vi, 38.) Now if Christians cordially *believed that what they give would be returned*

in this 'measure,' would there be the nipping, and screwing, and grudging, and hardening of heart, and closing of bowels of compassion, which are frequently practised by many, when they are appealed to in behalf of the cause of God and the poor? We trow not.

" 'Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (Acts xx, 35.) Again I ask, Who believes this? Do not many act as if the converse of this were the doctrine of the Lord Jesus? They believe it is blessed to receive; but so far from believing 'it is more blessed to give than to receive,' they scarcely believe it is at all 'blessed to give.' They would sooner almost do anything than give. They seldom do it, except it be 'grudgingly, or of necessity;' it is seldom 'of a ready mind.'

" 'He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.' (2 Cor. ix, 6.) Who gives credence to this? Do not numbers sow as 'sparingly' as they well can? From the small quantity of seed which they scatter, it may be inferred they do not expect to receive much harvest; for the Lord Jehovah declares, every man's return shall be in proportion to the seed which he sows. If this were believed, as it

ought to be, would not some sow more bounteously than they do ?*

“It is clear that many professing Christians need information on the doctrine of stewardship, and the right use of their gifts and property, whether little or much, great or small. Give instruction to those under your care in these things. Teach them to be liberal according to their ability; and tell them, as Paul did the Corinthians, ‘that God is able to,’ and therefore will, ‘make all grace to abound toward them; that they, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.’” (2 Cor. ix, 8, 11.)—*Fish's Manual*, pp. 109–116.

But, (returning from this digression,) in thus making the office of leader to bear a financial character, we are imitating the example of Christ's apostles. When they found that the temporal care of providing for the widows, by a “daily ministration,” increased, they said, “it is not meet that we should leave the word of

* “These observations are not intended to apply to many of the pious poor in our connexion; for we bear them record, that ‘their deep poverty abounds unto the riches of their liberality:’ for they frequently not only do to the extent of their power, but ‘beyond their power’”

God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." (Acts vi, 1-4.) Thus originated the office of deacons; and although, as is very plain from the entire history, these men were zealous and indefatigable preachers of the gospel, it is nevertheless true that the temporal embarrassments of the apostles gave rise to that grade of the ministry to which they belonged, and that it was to meet these embarrassing circumstances that they were appointed.

Now we do not contend that our leaders are equal in all respects to these primitive deacons, but we think there is a somewhat striking analogy, though not admitting of unqualified extension between these two classes of offices. They are both designed to relieve the chief pastor from oppressive cares and temporal concerns. But while they both have to do with the temporalities of the Church, they are, at the same time, both pastors, having the care of Christ's flock, and dispensing the truth as need requires. Sufficient has already been said, to show that this is the case with a Methodist class-leader; and that the deacon's office was minis-

terial and pastoral, cannot be disputed by any one at all acquainted with the Acts of the Apostles. These officers were all solemnly set apart by the imposition of hands. (Acts vi, 6.) "And Stephen," one of them, we read, was "full of faith and power," and "did great wonders and miracles among the people. . . . And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke." And after his memorable sermon in which he severely upbraided the Jews—as "the betrayers and murderers of the just One,"—a sketch of which is left on record, he gave up his life as the protomartyr of the Christian cause, and in consequence of his unwavering fidelity to the interests of the truth. (Acts vi, vii. *Passim*.)

In the eighth chapter we also read that Philip, another deacon, "went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them;" and "when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." The same deacon "preached Jesus" to the eunuch, (Acts viii, 35;) "and passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea. (Acts viii, 40.)

Would that, like these eminent men, our leaders were also "full of faith and the Holy Ghost!"

They would then be qualified not only to direct the finances of the Church, and thereby relieve from perplexing care the *preacher in charge*, but they would be able, like these primitive, holy deacons, to exert a decided and wholesome influence upon her spiritual interests, and to extend her aggressive movements. Their pastoral and financial duties would both command a due share of attention; the one would aid the other, and they would continually rejoice in seeing the general welfare of the Church promoted by their instrumentality.

SECTION III.

Administrative Duties of the Leader.

WE now have to consider the leader as an administrative officer of the Church. His duties are not confined to the members of his own class. He sustains an official relation to the Church generally. And so far as he aids in maintaining and executing our general regulations and disciplinary rules, his office is administrative in its character. The principal executive power is not vested in him; but, as the different classes of subordinates in our state governments are employed in carrying out the plans, and executing the will of the governor, to whom

is intrusted the chief authority; so, also, is he placed in a position, the duties of which require him to aid in upholding the government of the Church.

1. The office of a leader is seen to partake of an administrative character, in its requiring him to assist the preacher in charge in the exercise of pastoral discipline. (*Discipline*, p. 64, 3, where this point is fully presented.)

2. He sustains this character as a member of the leaders' meeting.

He is here expected to represent his members generally, and in particular to recommend those probationers belonging to his class, whose term of trial has expired, and who are eligible to full communion. Attention has already been directed to this point, and all that it requires is an incidental notice in this place.

Where there is a leaders' meeting, persons cannot receive license to exhort without its consent. The following is the rule upon the subject, from the section on the duties of those who have the charge of circuits or stations. "To license such persons as he may judge proper to officiate as exhorters in the Church, provided no person shall be so licensed without the consent of the leaders' meeting," &c.—*Discipline*, p. 56.

A recommendation is also required, either

“from the society of which” a person “is a member, or from the leaders’ meeting,” before the quarterly conference can confer license to preach. (See *Discipline*, p. 32.)

3. The leader is an administrative officer, as a member of the quarterly conference. By virtue of his office he is a member of this body, and takes part in all its business, and shares in its deliberations. (See *Discipline*, p. 31. Answer to Quest. 1.)

By considering the business which is transacted by the quarterly conference, we may form an idea of the prerogatives belonging to the office of a class-leader as a member of that body.

It is asked :—

“What shall be the regular business of the quarterly conference ?

“*Ans.* 1. To hear complaints, and to receive and try appeals.

“2. To superintend the interests of Sunday-schools.

“3. To appoint a committee to make an estimate of the amount necessary to furnish fuel and table expenses for the family or families of the preacher or preachers of the circuit or station.

“4. To take cognizance of all the local preachers in the circuit or station, and to inquire into

the gifts, labours, and usefulness of each preacher by name.

“ 5. To appoint stewards, the preacher in charge having a right to nominate; to examine the characters of exhorters annually, and recommend them, if appointed, for renewal of license; to license proper persons to preach, and renew their license annually, when in the judgment of said conference, their gifts, grace, and usefulness, will warrant such renewal; to recommend to the annual conference suitable candidates in the local connexion for deacons' or elders' orders, and for admission on trial in the travelling connexion; and to try, suspend, expel, or acquit any local preacher in the circuit or station against whom charges may be brought. *Provided*, that no person shall be licensed to preach without the recommendation of the society of which he is a member, or of a leaders' meeting. Nor shall any one be licensed to preach, or recommended to the annual conference to travel, or for ordination, without first being examined in the quarterly conference on the subject of doctrines and discipline.

“ 6. Each quarterly conference shall have supervision of all the Sunday-schools and Sunday-school societies within its bounds.”—*Discipline*, pp. 31, 32.)

We have quoted this section from the Discipline, in order to show, at a glance, all those interests which are to be influenced by the voice of the leader. All that is vital to the successful working of our system, and the prosecution of our work, seems to be made dependent, in a great measure, upon his vote. So far as the body of leaders make up the quarterly conferences, they are to determine appeals coming up from the lower courts, to exercise a general supervision of the Sunday-school cause among us, to recommend a renewal of the licences of exhorters, to grant and renew licences to preach, to appoint stewards, to control the ordination of local preachers, and to try them when under charges, as also to recommend those who are suitable for admission on trial in the travelling connexion.

We see plainly then that the leader's office does not occupy an insignificant place in our economy. Very much is dependent thereon. If our itinerancy be "the great iron wheel," then are its revolutions, and the operations of the machinery worked thereby, to be traced, in no small degree, to this inferior wheel, of less power, but contributing to the momentum and force of the larger one.

We do not mean to say that all this power is

found in the leaders, as a separate body, but that it is shared in by them as members of the quarterly conference. They can, in general, however, constituting, as they usually do, the majority of the quarterly conferences, give character to the proceedings, and control the action of these bodies. Thus our local preachers, and even our itinerant ministers, are started here, and here is to be found the opening wedge to all the great results of our itinerant system.

CHAPTER III.

THE DIFFICULTIES AND TRIALS CONNECTED
WITH THE OFFICE OF A LEADER.

In a world cursed by sin, and peopled with sinners, it cannot be expected that the instrumentalities employed for the diffusion of truth and godliness will meet with no resistance, or that those who are personally engaged in this work will encounter no difficulties. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and so far as it may be permitted to have sway, will oppose itself to the progress of his cause. And a thousand other hindrances — where no fixed and determined opposition to the principles of true religion exists, but connected in the manner of cause and effect, with a world in ruins—will be found to arise in the prosecution of any benevolent or evangelical enterprise.

Occupying, as he does, an elevated and prominent position in the Church of God, the class-leader will not be able to discharge his responsibilities without his share of trial and difficulty. It will be well, therefore, for him to prepare his mind for these things, to be ready for the storm when it may arise, and thus be strengthened to

resist the influences which may be made to bear against him.

1. In the first place, you will, without doubt, feel the importance of your position, and perhaps be oppressed with the weight of your responsibilities. Much is expected from you, and many eyes are gazing upon you. "A city set upon a hill cannot be hid." Many wait for your halting, and are ready to detect the smallest deviation from duty or consistency, and to rejoice in the occasion you may give for their reproach and mockery. You are a mark to be shot against. And the honour of Christ is more concerned in your fidelity, than in that of the ordinary professor. Everything depends upon the uniformity with which you maintain your Christian character, and perform the duties of your office. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if you sometimes tremble in view of your situation, and are tempted to think that you want the qualifications which are necessary to your office. Your feelings may vary at different times; you may not always be equally fervid and happy, or you may not at all times meet with the same amount of success in your ministrations and labours, and, discouraged by any positive failure, or unfavourable change, you may be inclined to relinquish *your charge*. But I advise you not to indulge

in these feelings. You have been providentially called to take part in the pastoral work ; you stand approved of your minister, as well as of your brethren ; and, until there is an intimation from the proper source that your services are no longer required, it should generally be considered as your duty to maintain your post, and to acquit yourself in that post, as well as you may be able. Always bear in mind your dependence, and forget not your privilege at the throne of grace. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him." (James i, 5.) If you would serve the cause of Christ, and if you would not deteriorate in personal piety, and endanger your personal salvation, neglect not "the gift that is in thee," and the work to which you have been called by the Church.

2. Like the minister of Christ, you will often be tempted to sadness and discouragement, previous to those ministrations in which, from time to time, you are engaged. "It is very likely that sometimes, when you are about to meet your class, you will be disturbed by some such thoughts as these :—' I feel as if I cannot say anything to my members, much more anything to profit them. I am afraid I shall be shut up and confounded before them.' Whenever this is

the case, notwithstanding you thus feel, go and make the attempt, relying on the Holy Spirit for assistance, and he will 'open to you a door of utterance.' On all occasions, when you are thus circumstanced, call to mind former times. Have you not often felt so? Have you not frequently gone to your class, thinking that you had not 'a portion of meat' to give to any one who might be present? And has not God, when you have gone prayerfully depending on him, helped you in that selfsame hour, and given you a 'mouth and wisdom,' so that you have been able to speak, 'not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth,' but in the words 'which the Holy Ghost teacheth,' with a power and a propriety which have been a source of surprise to yourself, and of blessing to others? Call these seasons to remembrance, whenever you are assailed from this quarter, and be encouraged by the recollection of them. He who thus 'helped your infirmities,' is without variableness or shadow of turning. The assistance which he has afforded in times past, he will afford in the time to come: only trust in Him, and you will never be confounded.

"It is not unlikely, moreover, that a train of thoughts something like the following will occasionally become a source of annoyance to you:

‘I can say nothing to my members which I have not said before; there is no point of experience upon which I have not dwelt, no species of temptation of which I have not spoken, no kind of trial concerning which I have not given advice. I shall be necessitated to repeat what I have often said to them, and I am afraid I shall weary them.’ Should it be so, do not let even this dishearten you; on the contrary, try to derive good from it. Let it be the means of stimulating to the acquisition of knowledge, and to the improvement of your qualifications. And as there are some great and leading truths which you must, with a continuance, bring before your class, in order to make them as interesting as possible, endeavour to vary your phraseology and illustrations. This will be a source of relief to your own mind, as well as a source of pleasure to them. But, after all, the great secret is, to take care that all you say proceeds from a warm and devout heart, and that it be accompanied by the gracious influences of the Spirit of God. You may give utterance to the same ideas, clothed in the same language, a thousand times; and yet what you thus deliver will always have a freshness and richness about it, so long as it flows from a feeling heart, and is attended with the unction of the Holy Ghost. What thus

proceeds from you will never grow stale, and will never weary those who listen to it. The Holy Spirit of God makes that which is old to appear new ; and gives to that which is of itself dull and unattractive, beauty, and vigour, and life. Recollect the language of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, 'To write the *same* things unto you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.' Paul found it necessary to write the same things, and you will find it necessary to speak them, and for a reason similar to the one which influenced him, and that is, the safety of those committed to your care."—*Fish's Manual*, pp. 126–128.

3. It may also be suggested, that you are disappointing the expectations of those by whom you have been appointed ; that you are not fulfilling the designs of your office ; and that you should, therefore, make way for a more competent person, by vacating your position.

But surely these thoughts are gratuitous. You must suppose the preacher in charge, from whom you received your appointment, to have acted in good conscience, when he invited you to share in his labours and responsibilities as a pastor of the flock, and it is hardly becoming in you to question his good judgment in continuing *you in office*. The presumption is, that the

opinion of others concerning you is more favourable than that which you have formed concerning yourself, and that your exercises in this respect constitute only a very common form in which temptation is presented to the minds of those who are engaged in any good work. And as to making room for others, there is no lack of opportunity to those who are seeking it to do good. The labourers in the vineyard of the Lord are not so numerous as that we can well spare any well-intentioned, though comparatively weak and inefficient, person, who is willing to do what he can in cultivating Emmanuel's grounds. "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." (Matt. ix, 36, 37.) Besides this, "the amount of good which you do is, in a great measure, hidden from you. It is wisely ordered it should be so; but, doubtless, it is much more than you conceive it to be. But, apart from other considerations, let me ask, is it nothing that you help to keep up the line of demarcation between the world and a number of good people, whom the Lord Jehovah has set *apart for himself*? Is it nothing that you go in

and out before them, and conduct their devotional services? Is it nothing that you direct penitents, and comfort mourners, and strengthen the wavering, and encourage the faint-hearted, and edify believers, and give advice and counsel as they may be required? Is it nothing that you go after the lost, and drive back those who have strayed, and visit and sympathize with the sick? Is it nothing that you help the ministry of Jesus Christ, and co-operate with your brethren to promote the prosperity of Zion? And is it nothing that you are agents in a movement which is exerting a greater moral influence in Christendom and the world than any other in existence? Are these things nothing? You dare not affirm they are. The good, then, which you are the means of effecting is, in the aggregate, great. It is direct and indirect, visible and invisible, temporal and spiritual, present, permanent, and eternal; you ought, therefore, to be encouraged to persevere, and to be 'steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,' in this department of his service, knowing 'your labour is not,' and cannot be, 'in vain in the Lord.' Do not forget that the amount of good which you may be the means of doing, is not the rule by which you ought to be governed. Success is cheering; but duty, not

success, is the rule of action."—*Fish's Manual*, p. 129.

4. You may be tempted on the ground of worldly interest. Properly to discharge your duties will take considerable time, and that time must, in part, though not ordinarily, be subtracted from the hours of business. You may not have so good an opportunity to make money, as those

“Who spend the day, and share the night”

in the worship of mammon, and the accumulation of gold. But what are the great purposes of life, and what is the nature of the warfare upon which you have entered? “Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” “Man shall not live by bread alone.” “What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?” are not the inquiries that should be permitted to engross the mind, and to corrode the heart. “Having food and raiment,” therefore, “let us be therewith content.” Ours is a holier and more honourable vocation. You are justly expected, in some measure, to participate in the self-denial of those who “leave all to follow Christ,” and to preach the gospel. And how many such have renounced all their worldly prospects for this privilege, satisfying themselves with a bare suffi-

ciency for the time being, and even that uncertain, while their maturest energies are employed in proclaiming the "unsearchable riches of Christ." It is not expected that you will go thus far. You are dependent, perhaps, upon your labours for a livelihood, and require to be "diligent in business," while in a fervent spirit you serve the Lord as a leader of the faithful. But it is a question, and one not difficult to answer, whether the most diligent performance of your duty would seriously interfere with your worldly interests. Perhaps the most you have of worldly goods is owing to those habits which have been induced by your piety. You have found that "godliness is profitable for the life that now is," as well as "for the life which is to come." Away then with thoughts like these. Grudge not the Lord the time necessary for his service, and entertain not for a moment the temptation which may be based upon this ground.*

° It should be admitted, that in many cases the burdens are unnecessarily great which are imposed on the leaders, on account of the excessive size of their classes. This evil, however, is not always to be laid at the door of the minister. It is frequently the leaders' own fault. Many leaders would rather attend carelessly to a large number of members, than have their classes diminished, by division, to a *convenient size*. You should advocate division, when necessary,

5. You will find your difficulties, too, in the character of those who are under your care.

Some, on account of their inexperience, will be easily led away, and disappoint the sanguine hopes you have cherished concerning them. Some, on account of their ignorance and want of culture, will be exceedingly slow to receive your instructions, and others again, of a higher grade of intellect, will be inflated with views of their self-sufficiency, and will fail to manifest that spirit of docility which you have a right to expect from them. Perhaps, instead of being "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath," they are directly the opposite;—"contentious," and indisposed to "obey the truth." They may have permitted prejudice to sour their minds against you, they may be unreasonable and obstinate in their opinions, and at the same time inconsistent in their moral conduct. They receive, perhaps, the reproofs you administer, in a manner that does not correspond with your charitable intentions, and take offence at the close scrutiny you find it necessary to institute into

instead of opposing it. The results will be favourable to all concerned. You will be able to attend better to those who remain. A single absent member will now be missing and inquired after, and the class will prosper and increase until ready for division again.

their experience and general character. You will sometimes find uncharitableness and disagreement among themselves. Instead of going on to perfection, they may show their "need" of learning "which be the first principles of the oracles of God," and be "such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Or, you may be tried with their irregular attendance. Sometimes they are at class, and sometimes not. Sometimes there in good season, and then again not coming until you are half way through. Perhaps they are exceedingly inconstant. At one time very zealous, and seeming to give promise of great piety and eminent usefulness, and soon after reflecting dishonour upon the Church, and wounding its friends by the folly and impropriety of their conduct, and making you to feel that your labour has been in vain in the Lord. Or you may be tried by their penuriousness. You are expected to see that the various class collections are attended to, and in your efforts to obtain subscriptions, find some of your members falling far behind the mark, which their circumstances would justify you in expecting them to approach. Perhaps the more affluent members, as it too often happens, give no more (if as much) than the poor ones. As a consequence, the amount you raise is smaller

than what is expected from you, and you may be called to bear the opprobrium which justly belongs to others. Now as you "have no greater joy" than when your members "walk in the truth," and give evidence of spiritual prosperity, so all these things, evincing their spiritual delinquency, are a source of pious grief and pain. Here is, perhaps, your severest trial. But remember, all God's servants have their trials. And those who are most diligent and faithful, are sometimes tried with greater severity than those who are exercised by no anxiety as to the final result of their labours. The most fervent, the most prayerful, the most laborious, and the most useful ministers of Christ, are sometimes called to pass through deep waters, and like their divine Master, are made to groan in spirit over the multiplied ills which crush a world that they aim to save, and render the work in which they are engaged more difficult and stupendous. Cheer yourself, then, by the company you keep, while a source of higher consolation is found in that grace, which is "sufficient for thee," and which will never fail thee. Expect these trials, and prepare to meet them in that spirit which is authorized by the unfailing promises of God, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

6. But after doing your best, you are sometimes found fault with, and this occasions you sorrow.

“But,” says the apostle, “he that judgeth me is the Lord.” To your own master you stand or fall. There always will be captious and complaining persons in the Church. And frequently those who do the least, complain the most. Now, I know not that you have anything to do with the careless and casual observations which may be made concerning the manner in which you discharge the duties of your office. One thing is certain; you are not accountable to such persons. They have no authority over you. It will be time enough for you to be troubled on this account, when a suggestion is made by your minister that you have committed an error, or when, through other friendly counsel, you have intimated that there is room for improvement. But even in this case, if you have a proper view of the matter, you will perceive that nothing more is required than that you should avail yourself of such suggestions, so as to make yourself more useful and available to the Church. Farther than this, you are not required to heed the rumours and suggestions which float upon the wings of the wind, and which, in many cases, *pass away* with the breath which gave them

currency. Stand then to your post. Pursue the even tenor of your way, through evil report and through good report; and so discharge your duty as ever to have impressed upon your mind, that you are to give account to God, and not to man. With an eye single to his glory, and the good of his cause, do your utmost in the station which you occupy, without respect to "the honour" or good opinion "which cometh from man." Thus in the day of his coming you may say,—

"I have fought my way through ;
I have finish'd the work thou didst give me to do!"

And then from your Lord you'll receive the glad word,—

"Well and faithfully done !
Enter into my joy, and sit down on my throne."

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE QUALIFICATIONS OF CLASS-LEADERS.

This office should not be assumed hastily, and without serious premeditation. Improper men should no more be found in this office, than in the performance of the higher and more sacred functions of the Christian ministry. Every man is not qualified for the post of leader. Those who might do good service to the Church in an inferior capacity, or who might be well qualified for some other office, such as that of steward or trustee, would perhaps greatly disparage the cause which they hoped to serve, by being placed in this relation, and by being thus made to assume responsibilities to which they are unequal. On this account men should beware how they covet this office. Well-qualified men are not so abundant as to be left unemployed when their services are greatly needed. It is because they are not deemed competent that they are not invited to perform this important part of the pastoral work. And yet there are those in our membership who conceive that they are neglected, and their talents undervalued, by being permitted to remain as private members of the

Church. They may think that they are as well-qualified as many others who are already in this office, and they may think correctly. For want of the most suitable persons, the preacher in charge is often under the necessity of appointing those who would otherwise be rejected on account of their unfitness. And it cannot be disguised, that this has become a serious evil. There are leaders among us who seem to have no just view of their responsibilities, and who are utterly without concern as to the manner in which they discharge the duties of their office, or as to the results of their labour. These considerations impress us deeply with the importance of the subject to be discussed in this chapter.

1. In the first place, then, it is necessary that the class-leader should understand his position; that he should be acquainted with the nature and responsibilities of his office, and that from voluntary choice he should bear this burden.

"No man," says Robert Hall, "ever excelled in a profession to which he did not feel an attachment bordering on enthusiasm, though what in other professions is enthusiasm, is, in ours, the dictate of sobriety and truth."

When men enter the ministry, ignorant of its holy functions, and under any other influence

than a controlling desire to discharge its sacred duties, and to act well the part assigned them, it is the most common thing to hear their conduct spoken of in terms of unmeasured vituperation and reproach. And the office of a leader is near akin, as we have seen, to that of a minister, involving pastoral obligations, and requiring unabated diligence and zeal. If the one should know where he stands, and what he is about, it is equally incumbent upon the other to do so. Instead, therefore, of running headlong, and jolting in the most reckless manner upon this office, the leader should take time seriously to consider the nature of this vocation. The Church has suffered as much from a loose and irresponsible feeling here, as from any other cause; and the man who would occupy this post of honour and of toil, can hardly be too conscientious in the spirit with which he enters upon his work. He should choose this work, and love it too, from a correct apprehension of its character, and the great results at which it aims.

2. The leader should be a man of some business talent. System and punctuality are required of him in attending to the interests of his class, as well as in performing with acceptability and profit the other duties of his station. As a member of the leaders' meeting, and of the quarterly

conference, it is necessary that he should possess these traits of character. At these meetings he is called to take part in transacting the business of the Church, and should be desirous of every prerequisite which will better enable him to promote her interest and prosperity. A due appreciation of the financial aspect which his office bears, and a readiness to avail himself of the peculiar conveniencies that appertain to his relation, for raising the funds which are necessary to the purposes of the Church, should mark his action.

Everything should be done with regularity; his engagements should be punctually attended to, a uniform system should be observed in making his collections, his class-book should be kept in a neat and business-like manner, the attendance of every member should be correctly marked, and the weekly or quarterly payments so noted, as to leave room for no uncertainty or mistake. (See Appendix C.) No leader should depend upon the minister, or any one else, to do this work for him. Let him keep his own class-book, and if he has not yet learned to do this, he should delay no longer in acquiring that knowledge of penmanship and figures which is necessary for this purpose. And surely none need despair of this, with the example of Car-

vosso before them, who, being appointed leader at an advanced period of life, learned to write by the simple exercise of marking weekly the attendance and payments of his members, and in time became quite a voluminous letter-writer, so as to have bequeathed to the Church a very valuable correspondence.

These, it is admitted, are secular, and somewhat inferior concerns in themselves, but from their intimate connexion with the spiritual interests of the Church, and the dependence of all our movements thereon, they are to be regarded as assuming something more than a mere temporal and worldly aspect. A man is consequently unfit for this office, who refuses thus to consider it, and who does not act in harmony with such a view. A proper attention must be paid to this subject. Some pains must be taken to cultivate a talent for business and finance, without considering ourselves at liberty to neglect or attend to it at pleasure. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke xvi, 10, 11.)

3. Leaders should be men of sound judgment. They should have some discernment of character, and a knowledge of human nature, and be

able to determine on the most judicious means for reaching all the ends of their appointment. Their entire career of official duty should show that they have not run listlessly upon an errand, but are well-advised as to every step, and that with becoming caution and wisdom they tread the path before them.

Some decision and strength of mind will be necessary to sustain them in the varied and changing circumstances of their relation. Differences of opinion may exist as to their qualifications in general, or as to the wisdom of their particular measures; but they should not be easily turned aside by the conflicting, and often unreasonable views of the multitude.

Whether the leader be employed in the pastoral duties of his office, or act as a financier in behalf of the Church, or aid in the administration of discipline, he is to repose his mind upon the strict integrity of his purposes, and the strong conviction he entertains of the practicability and wisdom of his plans, without being "driven with the wind, and tossed" on every rolling wave. "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." "Good understanding giveth favour."

4. This officer should also have some talent for speaking,—some gift of exhortation and prayer.

They are called upon weekly to communicate

more or less of divine truth, in the form of the varied instructions, which the different members of their class require. They are expected, in some instances, to resolve cases of conscience, and to meet difficult states of religious experience. It is, therefore, necessary that they should have at command appropriate texts of Scripture, and be able to deliver themselves in an intelligible and impressive manner. "*They* must impart intelligence as well as awaken emotion; and in order to overcome the apathy and imbecility of the great mass, the intelligence *they* would communicate must be, first, thoroughly comprehended by themselves, and then clothed with all the attractions and power of an able delivery."—*Clarke's Mental Discipline*, p. 119.

The changing aspects of Christian experience, and the multiplied conflicts of a religious life, require no ordinary tact in adapting our counsels thereto, and thus endeavouring to promote the designs of Christian communion. An effort then should be made to cultivate this gift. The leader should consider himself as obligated to use every means to qualify himself for the most efficient discharge of his duties. No labour should be considered as too difficult, and no effort as too unremitting and wearisome, for the accomplishment of an object so necessary and important.

By a regular and diligent study of the Holy Scriptures, by a perusal of our standard authors, and by a general discipline of your mental powers, as circumstances will admit, you will render yourselves competent for all the ordinary duties of your station, and be able to sustain yourselves honourably and usefully in the position to which in the providence of God you are assigned. Due effort in this department, persevered in and continued for a sufficient length of time, will not fail of its reward. And it should certainly be the holy ambition of every man, called to fill a responsible situation in the Church of God, to obtain the highest possible qualifications for his office. "There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel." (Prov. xx, 15.)

5. While thus endeavouring to acquire the talent of speaking in public, you are subjecting your mind to discipline and cultivation, and at the same time enlarging your stock of religious knowledge. And this is very essential. "No man is obliged to learn and know everything. This can neither be sought nor required; for it is utterly impossible. Yet all persons are under some obligation to improve their own understanding. Otherwise it would be a barren desert, or a forest overgrown with weeds and brambles.

Universal ignorance or infinite errors will overspread the mind which is utterly neglected, and lies without any cultivation."—*Dr. Watts.*

If this be true of men in general, it certainly holds good in relation to those who are "pastors and teachers" in the Church of God. It would be well, therefore, for you to practise upon another lesson inculcated by the same author:—"Once a day, especially in the early years of life and study, call yourselves to an account, and consider what new ideas, what new proposition or truth you have gained, what further confirmation of known truths, and what advances you have made in any part of knowledge; and, if possible, let no day pass away without some intellectual gain. Such a course, well pursued, must certainly advance us in useful knowledge. It is a wise proverb among the learned, borrowed from the lips and practice of a celebrated painter, *Nulla dies sine linea*, 'let no day pass without one line at least;' and it was a sacred rule among the Pythagoreans, that they should every evening thrice run over the affairs and actions of the day, and examine what their conduct had been, what they had done, or what they had neglected; and they assured their pupils, that by this method, they would make a noble progress in the path of virtue.

"Nor let soft slumber close your eyes,
 Before you 've recollected thrice
 The train of actions thro' the day.
 Where have my feet chose out the way?
 What have I learnt, where'er I 've been,
 From all I 've heard, from all I 've seen?
 What know I more, that's worth the knowing?
 What have I done, that's worth the doing?
 What have I sought, that I should shun?
 What duty have I left undone?
 Or into what new follies run?
 These self-inquiries are the road
 That leads to virtue and to God.

"I would be glad, among a nation of Christians, to find *men* heartily engaged in the practice of what this heathen writer teaches."

It is essential that divine truth should be impressed upon your mind, and your memory should be stored with the treasures of divine wisdom, if you would readily and impressively impart religious instruction to others. It is your office to confirm and instruct those under your care; and is it to be expected that these duties can be properly performed, while your mind is unfurnished with Scriptural and religious knowledge? With an understanding no way strengthened by appropriate exercise, how can you possibly, in any efficient manner, establish your members in Christian doctrine and practice? It is necessary that you should be familiar with the

cardinal doctrines of the gospel, with the scheme of redemption in all its prominent features, with the soul-inspiring promises of the sacred page, and with the exhaustless mine of inspired truth in general, upon which you may draw, whenever you have occasion, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" that all under your care "may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii, 16, 17.) Without this knowledge and mental cultivation, you will frequently find yourself the prey of the most distressing embarrassment.

"There is something in the very nature of theological truth, which gives confidence to the *speaker*. It opens, enlarges, and vivifies the mind. There is a clearness in truth, a directness, and a freshness in it, which strangely disenthral the spirit, and gives free, full scope. Truth favours freedom—freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of act."—*Prof. Parke*.

As there will perhaps be no dispute in reference to the value and importance of theological knowledge to the class-leader, the following direction as to the manner in which its study and pursuit should be conducted, will not be considered as out of place by those for whom I write.

“Offer up, therefore, your daily requests to God, the Father of lights, that he would bless all your attempts and labours in reading, study, and conversation. Think with yourself, how easily and how insensibly, by one turn of thought, he can lead you into a large scene of useful ideas. He can teach you to lay hold on a clue which may guide your thoughts with safety and ease through all the difficulties of an intricate subject.

“Think how easily the Author of your being can direct your motions by his providence, so that the glance of an eye, or a word striking the ear, or a sudden turn of the fancy, shall conduct you to a train of happy sentiments. By this secret and supreme method of government, he can draw you to read such a treatise, or to converse with such a person, who may give you more light into some deep subject in an hour, than you could obtain by a month of your own solitary labour.

“Think with yourself, with how much ease the God of spirits can cast into your mind some useful suggestion, and give a happy turn to your own thoughts, or the thoughts of those with whom you converse, whence you may derive unspeakable light and satisfaction in a matter that has long puzzled and entangled you. He can

show you a path 'which the vulture's eye has not seen,' and lead you by some unknown gate or portal, out of a wilderness and labyrinth of difficulties, wherein you have been long wandering.

"Implore constantly his divine grace, to point your inclination to proper studies, and to fix your heart there. He can keep off temptations on the right hand and on the left, both by the course of his providence, and by the secret and insensible intimations of his Spirit. He can guard your understanding from every evil influence of error, and secure you from the danger of evil books and men, which might otherwise have a fatal effect, and lead you into pernicious mistakes."—*Dr. Watts.*

It is not necessary that you should be a scholar, a man of extensive literary acquirements; but if you would attain to proficiency in the duties of your calling, you need to qualify yourself by such a degree of mental culture, as is necessary to the proper performance of those duties. It will not, therefore, be considered as gratuitous for me to mention some of those branches of study, and some of those books to which your attention should be directed.

If your advantages in early life have been limited, and you have not before paid attention

to them, I would advise you to husband your time, and devote the leisure hours which you may glean from more serious and important studies to English grammar, geography, and arithmetic. In the present day, a man, however zealous for God, and desirous of doing good, will labour to great disadvantage, without an acquaintance with these primary and fundamental branches of knowledge.

Among the books which I would recommend, are, first, the Bible, which should be read in course, with constant recurrence to the references of the margin, and also with the help of a good commentary. Clarke's and Benson's Commentaries, both have their peculiar excellencies. And the same may be said of Wesley's Notes, and Watson's Exposition. Such an acquaintance as you may be able to cultivate with them all, will be of singular advantage to you. Next, you should study the Discipline, and make yourself familiar, not only with the doctrines, but with the entire polity of Methodism. The Discipline, Hedding on the Discipline, Emory's History of the Discipline, Emory's Life and Works, together with Stevens and Hodgson on the Polity of Methodism, will give, perhaps, all the information you will need on these points.

I would also have you read and study the

revised Hymn-Book, recently published in accordance with the recommendation of the last General Conference.

In systematic divinity, I would recommend Wesley's Works, in general, and especially his Plain Account of Christian Perfection, his Treatise on Original Sin, and his Controversial Tracts; Watson's Institutes; Theological Compend, an excellent and most convenient little work for reference; Peck's Christian Perfection; Peck's Rule of Faith; Fletcher's Checks; Hibbard on Baptism; Bangs' Original Church of Christ; and Errors of Socinianism.

In experimental and practical divinity, I recommend the practical part of Wesley's Works, especially his Sermons; Fletcher's Letters; Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul; Alleine's Alarm; Baxter's Saints' Rest; Baxter's Call to the Unconverted; Bakewell's Admonitory Counsels; Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion; Mason on Self-Knowledge; Christian Exertion, or the Duty of Private Members of the Church to Labour for the Salvation of Souls; Christian's Manual; Christian's Pattern, abridged by John Wesley; Inquirer and New Convert, by Rev. Robert Young; Mammon, or Covetousness the Sin of the Church; Path of Life, by Rev. D. Wise; Pilgrim's Progress; Wesley's Journal;

Witness of the Spirit, by Rev. D. Walton ; Witnessing Church, by Rev. John Harris.

In biography, you should read, as a careful husbandry of your time will allow, the Lives of the Wesleys, by Watson, Moore, and Jackson ; Benson's Life of Fletcher ; Life of Mrs. Fletcher ; Memoirs of several Methodist Preachers, selected from Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers, by Rev. T. Jackson ; the Lives of Smith, Stoner, Treffry, Bramwell, Walsh, Carvosso, Hester Ann Rogers, Joseph Benson, Hannah S. Bunting, John Bunyan, Archbishop Cranmer, and Bishop Latimer, Dr. Adam Clarke, Melville B. Cox, Episcopius, Lady Maxwell, Henry Moore, &c.

I would also recommend the following miscellaneous works :—Bangs' History of the Methodist Episcopal Church ; Jackson's Centenary of Methodism ; Ruter's and Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History ; Horne's Introduction ; Powell on Apostolical Succession ; Watson's Sermons ; Clarke's Sermons ; Dick's Works ; Clark's Mental Discipline ; Watts' Improvement of the Mind ; Barr's Index ; and Gaston's Collections.

This list might, with great ease, be extended, so as to embrace many other most valuable books ; but it is not our design to suggest a thorough course of study, but only to give a clue to some of those works which are esteemed as

of a most excellent and standard character. Your own judgment will readily suggest what other selections are proper to be made, as you progress in reading and study. It may be thought by some, that the works already mentioned are too numerous, and that the majority of leaders cannot be expected to make an acquaintance with all the authors here recommended to their notice. But by a little economy of time, as well as of means, you will, I trust, as your wants demand, be able both to purchase and to study such a library in the main, as we have selected. At least, you would do well to set your mark high, even though the probability be not strong of your reaching it. Do not undervalue your own powers. Strain every nerve, and the result of your laudable effort will be such a degree of culture and improvement, and such an increase of your capacity for usefulness, as will amply reward your toil.

Deeply possess your mind with the importance of enlarged and correct views of divine truth; entertain just conceptions of your own need in this respect; presume not too much upon the natural strength of your intellectual powers; be animated in your pursuit of knowledge, by the prospect of new attainments and increased usefulness, and depend for success in all your

studies, and for the proper improvement of the knowledge gained thereby, on the blessing and guidance of Almighty God. Remember, "He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool." (Prov. xxviii, 26.) Therefore, "Trust *in the Lord* with all thy heart, and lean not to thine own understanding." (Prov. iii, 5.)

6. A class-leader should be known as a true Methodist.

By this I do not mean that he should be a religious bigot; that he should be obstinately and unreasonably attached to a certain set of usages and doctrines, leaving no room in his heart for those enlarged charities which would lead him to embrace Christians of every name; but that his principles should be those of a Methodist, without abatement and without qualification. This implies not only that he is strongly attached to the Church of his choice, that he is a great admirer of its institutions, and that he would greatly prefer its communion to that of any other; but that his attachment is founded upon the understanding which he has of its peculiarities. He is a Methodist, because he believes in its doctrines as evangelical, because he admires its usages, because he has no fault to find with its Discipline, and because he regards its economy in general as well-adapted to the great purposes

of church organization. On these points it is supposed he has informed himself; that he has read the Discipline, and carefully studied it; that he has made himself acquainted with Methodist doctrine as exposed and maintained by those standard authors whose works are recommended in the previous section. Of these authors especially, as a Methodist class-leader, he should not be ignorant. Some part of his time, however small from the necessity of the case it may be, should be regularly devoted to the study of Methodist theology, that he may be properly furnished for the performance of those duties which are appropriate to his calling.

It is necessary that he should be a Methodist himself, because he occupies a position of prominence among Methodists. He is set, in some good measure, for the defence of our Zion. Young converts are placed under his care to be instructed in Methodist principles, and he exerts a general influence, as far as he is known, towards moulding the reputation, and sustaining the character of the Church. He should, therefore, be true to the cause in which he acts so conspicuous a part.

On the importance of being well acquainted with Methodist literature, I will take the liberty of appending the following, from a tract written *by a Wesleyan minister* :—

“The history, discipline, and doctrines of Wesleyan Methodism are another branch of knowledge requisite to qualify you for your office.

“Every unprejudiced good man, who reads our history with care, must be convinced that it records one of the greatest revivals of spiritual religion that has occurred in the Christian Church since the apostolic age. Our cause has been resisted by men of all ranks and conditions ; talents and literature of the first order, and violence of the rudest and fiercest kind, have been employed to overthrow it ; but it has continued its steady and accelerating progress amidst the most formidable opposition. Our ministers, through all their generations to the present day, have been reviled, sometimes as illiterate and fanatical men, and again, as mercenary, tyrannical, and ambitious men ; but they have pursued the even tenor of their way, being in labours, zeal, and success, more abundant than many of their contemporaries ; and after all the reproaches which have been cast upon them, they have successively passed off the stage of life in joyful triumph, and their name and pious deeds are in the grateful recollection of tens of thousands, as precious ointment poured forth. No histories, excepting those of the martyrs, exhibit a more splendid succession of devoted lives

and triumphant deaths, than the biography of your preachers. Multitudes of our people have been reclaimed from the most vicious practices, rescued from an almost barbarous ignorance, and made useful members of civil and religious society. Hundreds of families have been raised from indigence to comfort, abundance, and affluence; and notwithstanding the secessions which have, at different times, occurred, the society has gone on increasing its numbers, without seeming to feel that any had withdrawn from it; and now its evangelizing leaven is operating upon a most extensive scale in all the four quarters of the globe. These are telling facts, and they will forcibly strike your minds when you read our history.

“By whatever name we may designate the discipline, or form of church government, which is established among us, it is manifest that its grand object is to unite together, in close Christian fellowship, a society of persons earnestly seeking the salvation of their own souls, walking in all things according to the word of God, and zealous to promote the conversion of others. Our system of doctrines contains the whole truth as it is in Christ, and is, we believe, in perfect accordance with the Scriptures; and like our *Discipline*, its design and tendency are to raise

men to the highest degree of Christian excellence to which they can attain in the present life. In order that you may know the former, it is necessary that you should be familiar with the general rules of the society, and read the annual Minutes of the Conference; and that you may understand the latter, it is expedient that you should acquaint yourselves with Mr. Wesley's Sermons, his Notes on the New Testament, and his Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion. Allow me also to recommend to you the regular perusal of all our periodicals and publications.

“This branch of knowledge will tend to confirm and strengthen your attachment to the system of Wesleyan Methodism, without which you would lack one requisite qualification for your office. If a leader do not cordially believe our doctrines, or if he be hostile to any important part of our Discipline, he will not act in harmony with us, nor faithfully discharge the duties of his trust.

“Let none of you, my brethren, be discouraged by what I have advanced on the necessity of such qualifications, from an apprehension that they are above your reach. You may now feel yourselves far below them; but by perseverance you will, at no distant period, arrive at the highest standard which I have proposed. In

order to this, two things are requisite: (1.) Access to the books which I have recommended. (2.) Time to read and study them. Rise early, avoid being too much in company, throw away no moments, and you will find sufficient time for these important pursuits. The advantages you will derive from the acquisition of useful knowledge, to say nothing of the benefits which will result to your classes, will yield you an ample recompense for all your labours in its pursuit. 'And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.'" (Phil. i, 9-11.)—*Edmund Grindrod*.

7. But, above all, this office should be filled by men "truly devoted to God."

"Take heed to thyself," is an injunction as necessary to a class-leader, as to a minister of the gospel. He should have an experience in the things of God himself, and well understand his own religious character and spiritual condition, while contributing to the advance of others in Christian experience. He should be a man of faith and prayer—known for his habitual and

fervent piety. An unconverted and graceless leader, or one in a backslidden state, is much worse than a mere church-member who is of a similar character. It is impossible that such a man should make a useful leader, and be a blessing to his class. It is not the easiest matter to give instruction in Christian experience, when it is the subject of personal knowledge and consciousness, much less when unfelt and unknown. A man who loves the enemy, is unfit for a soldier, much less a captain in Christ's militant Church. The reputation and influence of class-leaders should have no uncertain basis, but be founded on a character well established, consistent, and uniform. Their own example, in harmony with Christian precept, should instruct the members of their class. The duties which they enjoin, they should themselves practise, and the vices which they condemn, they should avoid. "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" Of a very different character were the Scribes and Pharisees in the time of our Lord, and therefore they incurred his severest denunciations:—"For they bind heavy burdens," says he, "and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Matt. xxiii, 4.) The leader himself then should

be "blameless;" free from pride and vanity, and all uncharitableness. His conversation should be seasoned with salt, - for *his word* especially would "eat as doth a canker." His intercourse with the world, and his business transactions, should be of such a character as to increase, rather than diminish his influence. He especially should not "contract debts without the probability of paying them," and should conduct all his secular affairs in the most equitable manner, while, at the same time, charity and benevolence show themselves prominent in all his dealings. He is called upon to practise self-denial, and to be faithful in the performance of every duty.

Without this grand prerequisite, all other qualifications are in vain. You may have great strength of understanding, your mind may be well stored with religious knowledge, and you may be sincerely attached to Methodism, but without the indispensable qualification of genuine piety, you will be *as salt having no savour*. All other knowledge will be useless, only as it may be rendered subsidiary to "the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins," and to the performance of those duties which devolve upon you as a leader of souls. You may greatly *extend your studies*; be well versed in the tongues

of classic antiquity, in the subtle philosophy and mythology of the ancient schools, in the precise demonstrations of mathematics, and in the discoveries of natural and moral science; but without an experimental knowledge of divine things, without a personal interest in the salvation of the gospel, whatever else you may be fit for, you will not be qualified for so important an office in the Church as that which we now consider.

And your piety should not merely consist of adventitious forms, and the performance of external duties; it should be that of the heart. It should involve the exercise of the warmest and purest affections. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. xxii, 37-39.) Love is the fulfilling of the law. The heart, warmed by this divine and animating principle, will prompt, in a manner of which no other influence is capable, to a high standard of moral action, and to an unwearied course of duty and usefulness. Thus our religion comes to be practical. "The tree is known by its fruits." "Out of the heart," no longer "proceed evil thoughts," and all manner of unholy and uncharitable actions, but "~~our~~

fruit is unto holiness." The mature and attractive graces of evangelical piety are exemplified in our blameless and consistent walk. "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God;" and "the fruit of *this* Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." (Eph. v, 9.) Thus, if we are not entirely sanctified, the seeds of this gracious work are sown in our hearts, and we are at least "groaning after it."

"The exemplification of all the graces of the Holy Spirit in the life, is the consummation of true piety. Do not be satisfied with an ordinary degree of religion, but seek to possess this essential qualification for your office, in a high and superior measure. You, especially, should 'follow on to apprehend all that for which you are apprehended of God in Christ Jesus.'

"Your piety should be *steady and uniform*. If your members observe in you any fickleness or wavering, they will lose their confidence in you: it should be *deep and fervent*, that a divine unction may attend all your words, and that your classes may be led, after your example, to seek entire holiness of heart and life. It should not be of a morose and forbidding kind, but *humble and gentle*; 'without partiality and hypocrisy,

full of mercy and good fruits.' In short, 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,' let them shine with a conspicuous lustre throughout your lives.

"However superior your other gifts and endowments may be, if you have not piety, you are unfit to be a leader among us; your example will not edify, whatever your words may do; the duties of your office will be irksome, and often neglected, or carelessly performed; and you will at last be unprepared to give up your account to the great Head of the Church. Pursue, therefore, as that which cannot be dispensed with, exalted piety, evinced by a close and persevering walk with God."—*Edmund Grindrod*’.

With the qualifications now noticed, a leader may be of great use among us, and contribute, in a pre-eminent degree, to the glory and strength of our Zion. None of the pre-requisites named can well be dispensed with. They are all of the highest importance, and, for the purpose of attaining them, should command unwearied and ceaseless exertion. The usefulness of the leader must rise or fall, as he varies from this standard. But

with a *sound mind*, an ardent piety, a desire to do good, a love for the Church and for souls, he cannot be otherwise than a pillar and support of the Christian cause, and an instrument of doing much good. That he may be encouraged in this "work of faith, and labour of love," we invite his attention to the few considerations contained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE MOTIVES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF CLASS-LEADERS.

IN view of what has been said upon the nature and responsibilities of the office filled by class-leaders, it is obvious that they need to be influenced by suitable motives, and to receive all the encouragement which the nature of the case may admit of being extended to them.

1. First, it would be well for them to consider that their responsibilities have been assumed in obedience to the call of the Church. They have been invited by the preacher in charge to aid him in his pastoral labours, and to attend to those financial duties which the care of a class involves. They have not, perhaps, desired this office; or if they have had any inclination towards it, it has only been from the conviction that they were required to do all in their power for the good of souls, and from the hope that they might, in this way, be rendered useful to their fellow-men. At least, they have not entered upon this work, without the approbation of their superiors. In these circumstances they may reasonably calculate upon the cordial sup-

port of the ministry, and may avail themselves of their judicious and pious counsel. It is some relief to the mind, when the most solemn obligations press upon us, to know that there are those whose pleasure it would be to help us bear our burdens, and that such are competent by their office, and the functions appertaining thereto, to render us this grateful and timely service. And I am sure that I can speak here for the great body of our ministers. Anxious that the interests of the Church may be promoted by your appointment, that the greatest success may crown your labours, and recognising you as fellow-helpers in their calling, they will not be slow in extending to you that friendly hand by which you will realize material assistance, together with that warm affection which will cheer you in your honourable and glorious toil.

2. But while in obedience to the call of those who "are over you in the Lord," you have engaged in this undertaking, you should at the same time consider yourselves as labouring in the vineyard of the Lord, and as exercised by a sole desire to advance his cause. If you feel as you should do, this will be your controlling motive. *An error here would spoil the whole, and be most fatal in its tendencies and results.* But on

this ground you may legitimately expect divine assistance in endeavouring to accomplish the ends of your appointment; and thus “your labour will not be in vain in the Lord.” Thus will you be “strong in the strength which is in Christ Jesus,” looking for help to him whose cause you serve, and fully persuaded that “neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” (1 Cor. iii, 7.) “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb. vi, 10.) You “go not a warfare at your own charges;” and he will see, for the honour of his own name, and the immutability of his promise and engagement, that you are sustained while doing his work. Were you actuated by any sinister or unworthy motives, these considerations would constitute no reliable support. If it were from a principle of self, and an emulation to be prominent in the Church, that you consented to assume this office, your expectation of divine and all-sufficient grace for the discharge of your responsibilities, must be very slender and precarious. But it is supposed that you have been governed by far different motives; that with a sincere aim to glorify God.

and in compliance with what you have felt to be an imperative obligation, this work has been engaged in. You are, therefore, fully authorized to place your dependence on him who has said,—“Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not.” (Gal. vi, 9.)

The following extract will be found to bear upon this point:—“Christian prudence pursues *Christian ends* on *Christian maxims*, and by *Christian means*. The ends it pursues are holiness in every kind, and in the highest degree; and usefulness in every kind and degree. And herein it proceeds on the following maxims:—‘The help that is done upon the earth, God doeth it himself;’ it is he that worketh all in all, and that not by human power; generally, he uses weak things to confound the strong: not by means of wealth; most of his choicest instruments may say, ‘silver and gold have I none:’ not by learned or ‘wise men after the flesh;’ no, the foolish things hath God chosen: not by men of reputation, but by men counted ‘as the filth of the earth, the offscouring of all things:’ all which is for this plain reason, ‘that no flesh may glory in his sight.’

“Christian prudence pursues these ends upon these principles, by only Christian means. A *truly prudent Christian*, while in things purely

indifferent, he becomes all things to all men; yet, wherever duty is concerned, regards the example of all mankind no more than a grain of sand. His word is then,

“ ‘Non me qui caetera vincit
Impetus, at rapido contrarius evehor orbi.’

“He will not, to gain the favour or shun the hate of all, omit the least point of duty. He cannot prevail upon himself, on any account or pretence, to use either simulation or dissimulation. There is no guile in his mouth, no evasion or ambiguity. Having one desire; one design to glorify God with his body and his spirit; having only one fear,

“ ‘Lest a motion, or a word,
Or thought arise, to grieve his Lord;’

“having one rule, the word of God, one guide, even his Spirit, he goes on in child-like simplicity. Continually seeing him that is invisible, he walks in open day. Looking unto Jesus, and deriving strength from him, he goes on in his steps in the work of faith, the labour of love, the patience of hope, till he is called up to be ever with the Lord.”—*John Wesley*.

3. But the nature of your office should, of itself, furnish encouragement. In becoming a leader, you have *taken great honour to yourself*.

You not only stand connected by ordinary membership with a Church that has distinguished herself above all her compeers for a most extraordinary career of usefulness, but you enjoy the elevated distinction of being prominent in her counsels, and of being advanced as one of her standard-bearers. If it is to be considered an honour to "be a door-keeper in the house of God," much more is it so to be a prince in Israel, or a captain in the host of God's elect. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," selected to be the associates of a Divine Trinity, all the persons of which are engaged and deeply interested in the same work; and to promote which, angels are ever on the wing, and the maturest and brightest minds incessantly employed. O,

" 'Tis not a work of small import,
The pastor's care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And filled a Saviour's hands."

Christ has "purchased the Church with his own blood," and it is your high duty, and should be your holy ambition, to do all in your power towards the consummation of the great object for which he suffered and died—"That he might *present it to himself a glorious Church, not*

having a spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” (Eph. v, 27.)

Your position is one of extended bearing and influence. You are regarded by the Church, and also by the world, as a representative, in some good degree, of her interests, and as an embodiment of her character. More or less deference is consequently paid to your opinion, and more or less influence exerted by your example. And, especially if your general course of life be such as to recommend and vindicate the interests of true religion, will you be honoured and respected by all who have those interests at heart. Those who have called upon you to assist them in their pastoral labours, and those who are benefitted by the faithful performance of your duties, together with all who are witnesses of your disinterested and self-denying labours, will give you the unreluctant meed of their approbation and love.

“Thanks, to men
Of noble minds, is honourable meed.”

If “the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance,” then will your good deeds not be forgotten. The members of your class, and of the Church in general, will ever regard and cherish your name “as ointment poured forth.”

and gratefully remember your services to them and the Christian cause.

And this is not worldly honour. It is the reputation of those, who, by doing good on earth, are seeking "to lay up treasure in heaven," to gather pearls and diamonds for decking the "many crowns" of Him whose are to be "the kingdoms of this world," and who is to reign "Lord over all, blessed forever." It is "the honour that cometh from above," the honour which is conferred by God upon all who labour faithfully for the promotion of his glory. "Him that honoureth me, I will honour." (1 Sam. ii, 30.)

4. You should be encouraged by the results of your labour.

If you have been any length of time in this office, and have been zealous and faithful, you have doubtless, ere this, been witness of some fruit to your toil. A faithful performance of duty never goes unrewarded, and the reward generally appears in the form of some tangible result, which constitutes in part the wages or compensation of the labourer. You have, perhaps, been made to rejoice over those you have been the means of quickening, and to whom it *has* been your privilege to administer consolation *in trouble*, and advice in difficulty and doubt.

Perhaps you have brought back some stray sheep which had wandered from the fold, or you may have been the instrument of introducing the broken-hearted and penitent sinner into the kingdom of grace. Some under your care, while enjoying your ministrations of life and love, may have gone safely and triumphantly to the pilgrim's home in heaven, and now, from the elevated heights of Mount Zion, look down upon you as having materially contributed to their final victory and triumph. Or if you have but recently entered upon your work, and as a guide of souls, have but just begun to feel the pressure of your responsibilities, you are authorized to look forward to a sure and certain reward of official integrity in the golden harvest, which "in due season you shall reap." The principal thing is, for you to mind your work, and, under a sense of your obligations, so to labour that you may be "acceptable to God, and approved of men." "Feed the flock of God" intrusted to your keeping, "taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter v, 2-4.)

If it be true that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," you will not "cast *your* bread upon the waters," without seeing it "gathered after many days." Be encouraged then. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv, 58.)

5. This labour in the cause of Christ will have a tendency to improve your own Christian character, and will result in many spiritual blessings. In doing good to others, we benefit ourselves:—

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd ;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is *twice* bless'd ;
It blesseth him who gives, and him who takes."

In discharging the duties which devolve upon you, you bring into salutary exercise your intellectual powers, you furnish your minds with useful knowledge, you give play to the warmest and purest affections of the heart ; and every repetition of those evangelical services elevates your own moral standing, and makes you more nearly to resemble Him who is the exhaustless fountain of truth and love. Thus you go on from grace to grace ; and as your physical powers strengthen by appropriate exercise, through the *wholesome* employment which is given to your

mental and moral energies, you will find yourself becoming "strong in the Lord, and the power of his might." By this means, also, you acquire a better knowledge of human nature, you become more thoroughly versed in the wiles of Satan, you are familiarized with the different grades of religious experience, from that of the babe in Christ, to its maturer developments, as found in him who is a young man, or a father in Israel. And while administering the counsel which these different states require, you are bringing under a wholesome discipline your own Christian principles and moral virtues.

You are as a friend and father among the members of your class. And if you are indeed thus, they regard you with feelings of strong attachment and love. You enjoy their Christian sympathies, and are remembered in their prayers. Thus the benefits arising from this relation are mutual. While endeavouring to profit them, they are contributing to your own more vigorous growth as a Christian believer, to an increased degree of spiritual comfort and joy, and to that "fulness of age" in which, "by reason of use, *your* senses are exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. v, 14.)

Nothing contributes so much to barrenness of soul, as indolence. He who stands *all the day*

idle in the market-place, will not be likely to reap in any considerable degree those fruits of the Spirit which consist of "love, joy, peace." It is according to a law of our natures, that the mind be incessantly employed. If it be not engaged upon interests worthy of its attention, it will find a listless or vicious exercise of its powers, exceedingly prejudicial to its moral sentiments and feelings, and seriously interfering with that growth of grace which would otherwise be secured.

As appropriate employment is the great condition and law of our spiritual life, it is exceedingly desirable that we should have some means for the regular and progressive development of our spiritual powers. Now the class-leader is placed in a position exactly corresponding with this necessity of his being. He has full opportunity for the exercise of all the Christian virtues, and for pursuing a course of extended usefulness; thus "working out his own salvation," while, under the Captain of their salvation, he is instrumental in "bringing many sons and daughters to glory." "Gird up the loins of your mind," then, and "quit yourselves like men." Hide not your talent. Live to God and his glory. So "shalt thou both save thyself and them that *hear thee*." (1 Tim. iv, 16.)



6. Finally, in all your labours you should have "respect unto the recompense of reward," awaiting you in heaven.

The present is a state of probation. The allotments of the eternal world will harmonize *exactly* with "the deeds done in the body." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for *whatsoever* a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi, 7, 8.) We are "stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter iv, 10.) And "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. iv, 2.) The command to every one is, "Occupy till I come." (Luke xix, 13.) And the rule upon which the divine administration is based, in the ultimate disposition of our cases, is made very plain by our Lord:—"Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Matt. xxv, 29.) Every one shall be rewarded or punished, according to the use he makes of the talents intrusted to his keeping. Hence, while the one talent was taken away from "the wicked and slothful servant," the *two* and the *five* talents of the others were increased respectively to *four*

and *ten*: and while one of them, the *unprofitable servant*, was *cast into outer darkness*, the other two heard from their Lord the approving welcome, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matt. xxv, 21, 23.)

Now, on the supposition that you possess talents which may be improved and rendered available to the Church, you have been placed in your present position. We need only conceive that you may here, in any degree, make yourself useful. You are required only to make use of what you have. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." (2 Cor. viii, 12.) There is much comfort to be derived from this consideration. We have not a hard master, "reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed," (Matt. xxv, 24;) but one who makes all necessary allowance for our infirmities, and requires only that we be "faithful in that which is little." And in order to encourage us to act well our part, he graciously records the most inspiring promises, "Whatsoever good thing a man doeth, *the same* shall he receive of the Lord." (Eph.

vi, 8.) "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv, 13.) "To him that soweth, righteousness shall be a sure reward." (Prov. xi, 18.) "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." (Dan. xii, 3.)

Now, although our responsibilities be ever so great, we have nothing to fear, but everything to hope, as long as we are in our proper place, and doing our best in the fear of the Lord. We have everything to encourage and stimulate us. The day is far spent. The night hastens on apace, when our work shall be done, and our reward secured. *There are crowns above*, awaiting the faithful labourer, and the toil-worn pilgrim. A glittering diadem shall decorate the honoured and illustrious brow of him who shall succeed in overcoming the world and sin, and in completing the task assigned him by his Divine Master.

"It is our felicity that we cannot describe the value and excellence of that reward. Yet a little while, and enjoyment shall explain to the faithful servants of Christ that which eye hath *not seen*, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived.

Then, my brethren, you will, in the presence of your Lord, be associated with patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, ministers, evangelists, elders, deacons, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Then you will meet with those whose burdens you carried in this state of trial ; in whose sorrows you sympathized ; whom you succoured in temptation ; whom you aided to fight the good fight of faith ; and who, with you, have trampled upon death, and obtained the final victory. Their glory will brighten yours, and their happiness will augment your unspeakable joys through the ages of eternity.”
—*Grindrod.*

CONCLUSION.

WE have now accomplished the task which, in the outset, we proposed to ourselves. We hope, not only that something has been contributed towards the better understanding, in general, of that institution which has given rise to this treatise, but that those particularly for whom this manual has been prepared, will find therein those instructions which are adapted to the position which they occupy, and to the supply of a want, to meet which no adequate effort has heretofore been made. It is not pretended that this work is perfect ; but we have done the best, which, under the pressure of other numerous and important engagements, we could. If we have rendered you any service, we herein find an ample reward. Our labour has not been in vain, and the profit is both yours and ours. “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them *which are sanctified.*” (Acts xx, 32.)

A P P E N D I X.

A.

"THERE then existed in London, for instance, 1. 'The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New-England, and the parts adjacent in America,' established by King Charles II., in 1661. 2. 'The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts,' instituted in 1701. 3. 'The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge,' which also was instituted in 1701. 4. 'The Society for Reformation of Manners,' which was commenced by five or six gentlemen of the Church of England, and sanctioned, in consequence of an address from the bishops and archbishops, by royal proclamation, in 1691. 5. There were twenty societies in London and Westminster at the beginning of the eighteenth century, 'of various qualities and functions, formed,' as Dr. Woodward says, 'in a subordination and correspondence one with another, and engaged in this Christian design (of reformation); all which have their set hours and places of meeting to direct, support, and execute this their great undertaking.' 6. There were 'The Religious Societies,' of which there were forty at the time Dr. Woodward wrote his account of them. The members of these societies were the most active members of 'The Society for the Reformation of Manners,' and of other societies, which had for

their object the suppression of vice. It was to these religious societies, doubtless, that Mr. Wesley had special reference in the above remarks; and, as Methodism seems to have been ingrafted on these societies, or rather to have swallowed them up, it may be interesting to know something more respecting them. It appears they were established about 1677. Dr. Woodward says, 'So far as I am able to trace their first rise, it was thus introduced by the gracious providence of God; it is now about two and thirty years ago that several young men of the Church of England, in the cities of London and Westminster, were about the same time touched with a very affecting sense of their sins, and began to apply themselves in a very serious manner to religious thoughts and purposes. I was, about that time, made privy to the spiritual sorrows of one of them, who, with floods of tears, lamented that he had not, till then, had any affecting apprehensions of the glorious majesty and perfections of Almighty God, nor of his infinite love to men, in his Son Jesus Christ; and that he had not felt before any just conceptions of the immense evil of every offence against God, though it be but, said he, in the wilful neglect or misperformance of any duty to him. But now he saw and groaned under all this, in very sharp and pungent convictions. And withal, perceiving the universal corruption of human nature, and the deplorable crookedness and deceit of man's heart, and with what a world of temptation we are encompassed, being withal besieged by many legions of infernal spirits; when he considered all this, his soul was even poured out within him, and he was in danger of being overwhelmed with excessive sorrow. The case was



very much the same with several young men at the same time, as he then told me; some of whom had been greatly tempted by the devil, that murderer from the beginning, to lay violent hands on themselves; which was also, he confessed, his own temptation, and that so urgent, sometimes, that sleep departed from his eyes, as well as rest from his soul.' (Observe, all this happened before Methodism had any existence!) 'In this mournful season, these disconsolate, convicted persons often resorted to their ministers for spiritual advice and succour, betaking themselves, in good earnest, to the ways of real piety and eternal peace. And it many times fell out, as the same person informed me, that several of them met together at the house of their spiritual physician, seeking cure for their wounded spirits; and so contracted a little acquaintance by those providential interviews.

" 'The benefit of Dr. Horneck's awakening sermons, and the morning lectures on the Lord's-day in Cornhill, preached by Mr. Smithie, (chiefly designed for the instruction of youth,) having occasioned much of this happy work upon the spirits of these young men, they did more particularly apply themselves to these divines for direction, who had been instruments in the hand of God for their conviction. And upon their frequent application to these and other ministers, it was advised that, since their troubles arose from the same spiritual cause, and since their inclinations and resolutions centred in the same purpose of a holy life, they would meet together once a week, and apply themselves to good discourse, and things wherein they might edify one another. And for the better regulation of their meetings, several rules were prescribed.

them, being such as seemed most proper to effect the end proposed. Upon this they met together, and kept to their rules, and at every meeting, (as it was advised,) they considered the wants of the poor. These young men soon found the benefit of their conferences one with another, by which, as some of them have told me with joy, they better discovered their corruptions, the devil's temptations, and how to countermine his subtle devices; as to which, *each person communicated his experiences to the rest.*

"For the better management of their common stock for charitable purposes, they made choice of *two stewards.* These were appointed first in 1678.

"In the end of the reign of Charles II., and during the reign of James II., 'when all private meetings were suspected,' the members of these societies met with much discouragement, and many were turned from the way of righteousness. The events which transpired, caused them 'to change the name of the society for that of a club; and instead of meeting at a friend's house, who might be endangered by it, they adjourned to some public house or other, where they could have a room to themselves; and, under the pretext of spending a shilling or two, they conferred seriously together in the same religious manner as formerly, by which honest artifice they carried on their good design without interruption.' "

It was not without sufficient reason that they thus acted, as the following fact, related in Bennet's "Memorials of the Reformation," p. 289, will show:—"A number of young men in the town of Newcastle, (about twenty,) met together once a week for mutual assistance and improvement in religion; (here was a reli-

gious society;) for which purpose they spent some time in prayer and conference; having subscribed a paper containing rules for the better ordering of such society, and the work to be done is taken out of a book^o of Mr. Isaac Ambrose's. One of the Society turns informer, and, having a copy of this dangerous paper, with the names of the subscribers, makes a discovery, and the whole matter was laid before (that execrable wretch) Judge Jeffries, at the assizes; by which it appeared to his lordship, that about twenty young fanatics met together weekly to pray and talk about religion, &c.; his lordship, whose business lay as much with such as these, as with felons, &c., resolved to make examples of them. When he was prepared to proceed against them, he ordered the doors of the court to be locked up, and kept locked till such of the young men as were in court were secured; and, at the same time, despatched the sheriff with the proper officers to apprehend the rest, the doors being still kept closed, which made no small noise and stir in the town. His lordship, as his manner was, began to breathe out threatening against the dissenters. And whereas, some of the elder of them, with whom his lordship would have taken an occasion to have talked, were withdrawn from the town; he said, *He would take the cubs, and that would make the old foxes appear.*"

The offenders are presented before his lordship's tribunal. Such as knew his lordship's character, will easily imagine (and some will remember it) with how much contempt and indignation he would look down upon these young men. One of them, Mr. Thomas Verner, his lordship was pleased to single out, no ques-

• "Media; or, Middle Things."

tion to triumph over his ignorance, and thereby expose all the rest. "Can you read, sirrah?" says he. "Yes, my lord," answered Mr. Verner. "Reach him the book," says the judge. The clerk reaches him his Latin Testament. The young man begins to read Matt. vii, 1, (it being the first place his eye lit upon, without any design in him, as he affirmed afterwards,) *Ne judicate, ne judicemini, &c.* "Construe it, sirrah," says the judge, which he did: "Judge not, lest ye be judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." Upon which, it is said, his lordship was a little struck, and sat in a pause for some while.

"The issue of the matter was this, that the young men, though never tried, were sent to gaol, where they lay above a year; that is, from the assizes in 1683, till the first assizes after the death of King Charles II., when they were called upon and set at liberty, with this reprimand from the judge, *Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you*; adding, that the king coming to the throne, had saved all their lives." It appears they were indicted for high treason; and as there was a packed jury, there is no doubt they would have suffered death.

It is probable that this "religious society," in Newcastle, was in existence when John Wesley visited that town in 1742; for he, on that occasion, found some who told him they were members of a religious society which had subsisted for many years, that they had a fine library, and that the steward read a sermon every Sunday.

On the accession of William and Mary, the members of these societies came out of their hiding-places, and acted as they did at the commencement of their opera-

tions, having, by their consistency, piety, and good service, secured public confidence and esteem.

"The first design," says Dr. Woodward, "of those who joined in this religious fellowship, looked no farther than the mutual assistance and consolation one of another in their Christian warfare; that by their interchanged counsels and exhortations, they might the better maintain their integrity in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. But as their sense of the blessedness of religion, and the value of immortal souls increased, they could not but exercise bowels of compassion towards such as discovered little concern about these important matters. This inclined them to endeavour, by discourse with their acquaintance, at proper seasons, to press upon them those divine arguments, whereby themselves had been roused out of a state of carnal insensibleness." Finding that they were successful in their efforts, "they made a private order at one of their assemblies, that *every one should endeavour to bring one other at least* into their society, which they did to good effect. Thus these religious fraternities grew and increased even till they became conspicuous, and in some degree famous.

"There is," he continues, "such love amongst those of them that have fallen under my observation, that scarce any natural brothers are so affectionate; and those who are newly admitted are soon contracted into the same fellowship of Christian brotherhood. They are also far from rigid censure and unkind treatment of any sorts of Christians. As they truly aim at true Christianity, so they value it wherever they find it."

These societies, in the course of time, were esta-

blished in various parts of the nation, as at Nottingham, Gloucester, Bristol,^o Hull, Leicester, &c. ; also in Dublin and other parts of Ireland. (See note, *Class-leader's Manual*, by Henry Fish, p. 35.)

It was at one of these religious societies that John Wesley obtained the saving grace of God. "On Wednesday evening," says he, "I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed; I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

"I began to pray with all my might for those who had, in a more especial manner, despitefully used me, and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all these, what I now first felt in my heart."—*Works*, vol. iii, p. 74.

After his conversion, it may be supposed he did not neglect a means from which he had derived such essential benefit. It appears that he was in the habit of

^o "One of these 'societies' met in Baldwin-street, Bristol, previous to the period that Mr. Wesley visited this city. Of this, Mr. Durbin, of whom there is some account in 'the Methodist Magazine' for 1799, p. 487, was a member; hence Mr. Durbin often used to say, 'I had the honour to receive Mr. Wesley into society; for we were formed into a regular society before he came to Bristol; and he joined with us, and became our teacher.'"—(*London*) *Class-leader's Manual*, by Henry Fish, page 3.

meeting in these small assemblies, and participating in the services—by declaring what God had done for his soul, and, when driven from the churches of the establishment, by preaching to the multitudes, which flocked thither when it was known that he was to be present. “I was told,” says he, “I must preach no more in this, and this, and another church; the reason was usually added without reserve, ‘Because you preach such doctrines.’ So much the more those who could not hear me there, flocked together when I was at any of the societies; where I spoke more or less, though with much inconvenience, to as many as the room I was in would contain.”—*Works*, vol. i, p. 93.

These “religious societies,” no doubt, suggested the formation of those Methodist societies which existed before what are called the United Societies were organized. The first society of this character met at Oxford, the second was that at Savannah, which met in the house of Mr. Wesley every Sunday afternoon, and the third was formed in London, after his return from Georgia, under the advice and encouragement of Peter Böhler. The fourth was in Bristol, and some adjacent places. The rise of the United Societies, and their division into classes, were events which subsequently took place, and of which no more need be said in this place. (See Centenary of Wesleyan Methodism, p. 47-62.)

B.

The duty of preachers, with reference to classes.^o

THE preacher in charge is expected to have the general superintendence of the classes, as they collectively constitute the "flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer to feed the Church of God," and as they are the appointed means through which his pastoral supervision may be more conveniently maintained. All the interests then that pertain to this institution are under the control, and in the hands of the minister, and there must be a corresponding extent to the duties which he is called upon to perform.

These regard the organization of classes, the appointment and general supervision of their leaders, and of the members of which they are composed.

1. It is the duty of the preacher having charge of a circuit or station, to see that the society is organized into classes. According to our general rules, and other sections of our Discipline, every member must be assigned to some class, and it is through his connexion with the class that he maintains his relation as a member of the Church. He cannot belong to the one, either as a probationer or full member, without belonging in the same sense to the other. The Church and the class are not separate and distinct, so as to be independent of each other, but the one is a constituent and essential part of the other. It is an error, therefore, to suppose, as some, joining our Church on trial, and enrolling their names on the class-book, have

^o This note is an extract from another manuscript of the author's, which will account for the slight repetition it contains.

done, that by this act they have entered into no connexion with the Church, and may retain or dissolve their union with the class at pleasure, without being reflected on as having been in any sense members of the Church. The class and the Church in this respect are one. It is the duty of the preacher to recognise none as members of the Church, only as they may be connected with one of the several classes.

Our ministers profess to be called of God to preach the gospel, and urge sinners to repentance. They go forth with this only design, and labour for this sole end. If success crowns their work, and sinners are converted through their instrumentality, it becomes their duty to exercise a pastoral care over the lost sheep they have thus found, and to see that they are securely folded in the Church of Christ. This duty is suggested not only by the great Shepherd, who says to all upon whom he has made this high vocation to devolve, "Feed my sheep," but by the very circumstances in which the minister of Christ finds himself placed. He is surrounded and followed by those who look up to him as their father in Christ, and it seems that those who have been instrumental in saving their souls from death, would be the most proper persons to whose spiritual care they should be intrusted. None are likely to be exercised by so deep an interest in their welfare, and there are none towards whom these young converts themselves will cherish such a warm and filial affection. So that this reasonable expectation cannot be contravened without mutual distress and loss. On these accounts it is to be considered as an imperative duty of such ministers, to watch over these souls, and to use all proper and necessary means

to insure their continued fidelity and ultimate salvation. Now it is to fulfil this pastoral obligation, and to furnish those who are thus providentially committed to our charge, with all the advantages accruing from constant communion with God's people, and from the instruction which is by this means received, that they are put into a class, and under the care of a devoted and competent leader. This is the plan of pastoral work, as pursued by the Methodist ministry. If the "word of the Lord," which they preach, "has free course, runs, and is glorified" in the salvation of sinners, they thus seek to confirm and build them up in their "most holy faith."

According to our General Rules, "there are *about* twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader." By the manner in which this limited number is qualified, the preacher is left at liberty to control himself by circumstances, as it is not always practicable to make this minute division, from the manner in which many of our societies are scattered over a wide extent of country, and the more serious difficulty of obtaining suitable persons as leaders. It is consequently not expected that the letter of this rule will be strictly adhered to, although, when circumstances will permit, taking into consideration all the bearings of the case, no wisdom will be displayed by an unnecessary departure therefrom. The general understanding of the rule may be seen by a note of our primitive bishops:—

"We have found it necessary in innumerable instances to enlarge the number of the class, from the impossibility of providing a sufficiency of class-leaders, if the number were always limited to twelve.

"At the beginning of Methodism, the leader called weekly upon each of his class, in which case twelve were quite sufficient for his inspection. But very soon it was found abundantly preferable for the whole class to meet the leader together, not only for the sake of the leader, but for the good of the people, who, by that means, enjoy the unspeakable advantage of Christian fellowship." With this liberal construction of the rule, and on account of the necessity of the case here noticed, a greater number are frequently included in a class, than that to which we were at first limited.

The Methodist minister, then, arranges his flock into these little companies, and endeavours thus to fulfil his obligations to them in the best possible manner. Thus also he conforms to that rule of discipline which makes it his duty "to receive members." (See *Discipline*, p. 51.)

This ministerial prerogative is thus noticed by Coke and Asbury :—

"He is also to receive members on trial and into society, according to the form of Discipline. If this authority were vested in the society, or any part of it, the great work of revival would soon be at an end. A very remarkable proof of this was given by a society several years ago in Europe. Many of the leading members of that society were exceedingly importunate to have the whole government of their society invested in a meeting composed of the principal preacher, and a number of *lay elders* and *lay deacons*, as they termed them. At last, the preacher who had the oversight of the circuit was prevailed on, through their incessant importunity, to comply with their request. He accordingly nominated all the *leaders* and

stewards as lay elders and lay deacons, with the desired powers. But, alas! what was the consequence? The great revival which was then in that society and congregation, was soon extinguished. Poor sinners, nearly awakened, were flocking into the Church of God, as doves to their windows. But now the wisdom and prudence of the *new court* kept them at a distance, till they had given full proof of their repentance: 'If their convictions be sincere,' said they, 'they will not withdraw themselves from the preaching of the word on account of our caution; they themselves will see the propriety of our conduct.' Thus, while the fervent preacher was one hour declaring the willingness of Christ immediately to receive the returning sinners, the wisdom of the lay elders and the lay deacons would the next hour reject them even from being received on trial, unless they had been before *painted sepulchres, inwardly full of dead men's bones and rottenness*. The preacher who had the charge of the circuit, nearly broke his heart to see the precious souls which God had given him kept at a distance from him, and thrown back again upon the wide world by the *prudent lay elders and lay deacons*. However, at his earnest entreaty, he was removed into another circuit by the conference, under whose control he acted, to enjoy the blessings of the *Methodist economy*. The revival of the work of God was soon extinguished, and the society, from being one of the most lively, became one of the most languid in Europe.

"Glory be to God, *all* our societies throughout the world, now amounting to upward of one hundred and *sixty* thousand, have been raised, under grace, by our *ministers and preachers*. They, and they only, are their

spiritual fathers under God, and none others can feel for them as *they* do. It is true, that on great revivals, the spiritually halt, and blind, and lame, will press in crowds into the Church of God; and they are welcome to all that we can do for their invaluable souls, till they prove unfaithful to convincing or converting grace. And we will not throw back their souls on the wicked world, while groaning under the burden of sin, because many on the trial quench their convictions, or perhaps were hypocritical from the beginning. We would sooner go again into the highways and hedges, and form new societies, as at first, than we would give up a privilege so essential to the ministerial office, and to the revival of the work of God.

“ ‘The master of the house [God] said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and *bring in hither* the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.’ He obeys his God without asking permission of any society, whether he should obey him or not. ‘And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and *compel them to come in*, that *my house* may be filled.’ Luke xiv, 21-23. The servant answers not to his God, ‘I will comply with thy command as far as my society, or my leaders, and stewards will permit me.’ Again, the Lord says to Ezekiel, chap. xxxiv, 2-10, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Woe be to the shepherds of Israel. . . . The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was *sick*, neither have ye bound up that which was *broken*,

neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost.

And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and *I will require my flock at their hand*, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.'

' " Now, what pastors, called and owned of God, would take upon themselves this awful responsibility, if others could refuse to their spiritual children the grand external privilege of the gospel, or admit among them the most improper persons to mix with and corrupt them? Truly, whatever the pastors of other churches may do, we trust that ours will never put themselves under so dreadful a bondage. It is in vain to say, that others may be as tender and cautious as *the pastors*; for *the pastors* are the persons responsible to God, and, therefore, should by no means be thus fettered in their pastoral care. And those who are desirous to wrest out of the hands of ministers this important part of their duty, should rather go out themselves into the highways and hedges, and preach *the everlasting gospel*, or be contented with their *present providential situation*.

"Besides, the command of our Lord, (Matt. xxviii, 19,) 'Go ye, . . . and teach all nations, *baptizing* them,' &c., is addressed to *pastors only*—to his disciples, and through them to all his *ministering* servants, to the end of the world. But if ministers are to be the judges of the proper subjects of *baptism*, which is, the grand initiatory ordinance into the visible Church, how much more should they have a right to determine whom they will take under *their own* care, or whom God has given them out of the world by the preaching of his word! For ministers to spend their strength, their tears, their prayers, their lives, for the salvation of souls, and to have both themselves and *theirs* under the control of those who never travailed in birth for them, and therefore can never feel for them as their spiritual parents do, is a burden we cannot bear. Thus it is evident that both reason and Scripture do, in the clearest manner, make the privilege or power now under consideration, essential to the gospel ministry."—*Notes*, chap. i., sec. 10, 5.

2. The duty of the preacher in charge has respect also to the class-leaders. These officers are to be appointed by him. (See *Discipline*, p. 51.)

The responsibility of the minister as a pastor over the flock, is not transferable. Neither the society of which he has the charge, nor any smaller number, can assume the duties which belong peculiarly to his office. And although he may deem it expedient and necessary to select good men and true, to assist him in bearing his burden, the weight of obligation and responsibility must nevertheless rest upon him. It should, therefore, be his aim to meet that responsibility in the most satisfactory and able manner. With this view

he organizes classes, and appoints their leaders; only that his obligations as a minister of Christ, and as a shepherd of the flock, may be answered, and the most material and efficient aid be furnished him in doing his own proper work. And surely, as it is only the pastor's work that is to be done, it is suitable and obligatory that that work in all its departments should be controlled and directed by the pastor alone.^o On this point I will do myself the pleasure of quoting from an able little work by one of our living writers:—

“The leaders he (the preacher) appoints; and he should do so for these good reasons: 1. *Their work is entirely his*; it is pastoral labour. The labours of long circuits would not at first allow the preacher to visit much the members of the local appointments. Leaders did, and still do, this work in another form. It is a spiritual supervision of the Church, rightfully pertaining to the ministry; but in this delegated in part to the leaders. The ministry should certainly have the power to choose their delegates to do their own work. 2. What might be the results, if the classes should choose their own leaders, as among the seceders? These classes are often composed of young converts, and include all members, however excitable or extravagant. The man who could be most extravagant, would, in many cases, be preferred; not the aged and experienced, who could instruct and build them up. 3. The process of electioneering, through all the classes once a year, would produce endless distractions and feuds; and 4. Members of classes who should

^o In the Protestant Methodist Church, and some other secessions, the leaders are elected by the several classes.

vote against their leader, would ever feel uneasy under his guidance ; his reproofs would be construed into party prejudice, and his admonitions be rejected. Better would it be to give up the classes, than have them thus fountains of discord."^o—*Stevens' Church Polity*, p. 165.

For reasons similar to those now given, the preacher changes the leaders when it becomes necessary. (See *Discipline*, p 51.) However well qualified a man may be when first appointed to this office, it is not always the case that he is permanently useful. Various causes may contribute to the diminution of his influence, and call for his removal. And as it is the design that he should nourish and feed his little flock, and lend all the aid in his power to promote their prosperity, if ever the time comes when these ends are not subserved by him, then does it become the duty of the preacher, as chief pastor, to displace him, and make room for another who will better answer the design of the office.

Whether he becomes disqualified by that incessant wear to which his talents are not equal, by a decline in his own religious attainments, by a neglect of the duties belonging to his vocation, or by a loss of reputation and influence in the society to which he belongs, or from any other cause, the duty of the preacher in either case is the same. *His* work, as a pastor, is not promoted, as was contemplated in his appointment, and his place should therefore be filled by another who will discharge with greater fidelity the important

^o Some of these disadvantages are obviated, in part, among the seceders, by making the election of leaders through the ballot.

duties of his vocation. And this is an obligation devolving upon the preacher in charge, which he cannot assume or lay aside at pleasure. It is his duty to see that all such necessary changes are effected. "As the preacher in charge is the only person in the circuit who is responsible to the yearly conference for the decline of the work of God in his circuit, and the only one the conference *can make* responsible, he has the authority vested in him of changing leaders when they have lost the life of God, or are incapacitated for, or negligent of, their duty. But if he ever use this power in a capricious or tyrannical manner, the people may lay their grievances before the bishops or presiding elders, who have authority to suspend him for ill conduct; or before the yearly conference, which may proceed even to his expulsion, if he grossly offend against that 'wisdom which is from above, and which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.' James iii, 17."—*Notes on Discipline*, by Coke and Asbury.

It is to be acknowledged and deprecated, that these changes are not always made when necessary for the greatest good of the cause. The sentiment prevails too widely, that if a man once becomes a leader, he cannot be removed from office without in some way being unjustly dealt with. While serving the Church in this capacity, he, of course, as a general thing, forms his attachments, and makes his friends, while, at the same time, he has his own private relations and friendships in social life, altogether making it a matter of some difficulty and delicacy to remove him. *And besides this, we cannot always supply the place*

of such a man by one who would be more competent, and do a better service to the Church. It is not the easiest thing to find men who are *every way* competent for this office; and therefore it is sometimes best to bear with the delinquencies of those who sustain this relation, if they are not of too gross and serious a kind, rather than run the risk of introducing confusion and excitement into the Church. If, however, the way is clear, we should not halt or waver. Upon the preacher rests the responsibility in all such cases, and he is under obligation to do the best he can, considering all the circumstances of the case. It is, however, to be regretted, that a different state of feeling does not render a more frequent change of leaders easy and practicable.

With the same view it is enjoined upon the preacher:—"Let the leaders frequently meet each other's classes." And,

"Let us observe which leaders are the most useful, and let them meet the other classes as often as possible." (See *Discipline*, p. 74.) Thus maintaining a subordinate and limited itinerancy within the limits of a single charge, distributing the most available talent of the Church, and by this healthful circulation of the life blood of the system, preserving the vitality and vigour of every part.

In reference to the qualifications of leaders, the preacher is required to "see that they are men, not only of sound judgment, but men truly devoted to God."—*Discipline*, p. 74.

These are indispensable prerequisites for such an office. Without them no man is competent to take the charge of souls; and it is because of the character

of this work that such qualifications are deemed necessary. Everything looks toward the pastoral character of the leader, as subordinate to the preacher in charge, and designed to assist him in the performance of his pastoral duties, and everything is estimated only as it may be conducive to this end. This aspect of the question is not with sufficient prominence held up to view. Our minds cannot be too strongly impressed with this sentiment, authorized as it is by our Discipline, and by the relation itself, which a leader sustains to his class. The greatest mental competency, and the highest intellectual attainments, without a considerable share of Divine grace, are insufficient qualifications for this responsible office. Hence the scrupulous care which should be exercised by him who has the appointment and control of those by whom it is to be filled.

The preacher in charge is also to hold leaders' meetings.

In our General Rules, it is made the duty of the leader "to meet the minister and stewards of the society, *once a week*." In part I., chap. iv, sec. 11, of the Discipline, one of the duties of the preacher in charge is, "To meet the stewards and leaders *as often as possible*." We see here a slight discrepancy: one rule requiring the preacher to meet the leaders and stewards *weekly*, and the other *as often as possible*. In the application of this rule, the *weekly* leaders' meeting generally obtains in our cities and larger towns, while these officers are less frequently convened in country circuits, and sparsely settled districts. These rules were so interpreted by our early bishops in the notes *which were appended at one time to our Discipline* :—

"He (the preacher) is to watch over the stewards and leaders of his circuit. *He should meet them weekly when in the towns, and as often as may be in the country.*"

At these meetings, the leader is

"1. To inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov'd.

"2. To pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding." (See *Discipline*, p. 21.)

It is also the province of the preacher in charge "to examine each of the leaders diligently concerning his method of meeting a class." And this is to "be done with all possible exactness, at least once a quarter."

The leaders are also required to "converse with those who have the charge of their circuits frequently and freely." (See *Discipline*, p. 73.)

This mutual and friendly inquiry may be conducted in a very convenient and advantageous manner on the occasions of which we speak.

Thus it is through the leaders' meeting that a system of efficient finance may be obtained, that a knowledge of the spiritual state and temporal distresses of the members generally may be acquired, the responsibility of leaders enforced, and a wholesome general superintendence be exercised over the entire Church.

3. The duty of preachers is to be considered as extending to the members of which the classes are composed.

"To meet the societies, classes, and general bands," constitutes a part of their regular work. (See *Discipline*, p. 48.)

While the leaders' meeting furnishes an admirable means for the exercise of a general supervision over

the society, by a faithful performance of this part of his duties, the preacher reaches in a more direct and effectual manner every member of his charge.

At the meetings of the society he has an opportunity of giving those general instructions which the case may require, of reading "the rules of the society," as the Discipline directs, and of attending to other duties which may be conveniently performed at the same time. (See *Discipline*, p. 54.)

At the general bands, or fellowship meetings of the society, he also meets with the different classes, and, as at our love-feasts, hears from them their religious experience, and thus becomes generally acquainted with the Christian character of his members, as time and circumstances may favour.^o

But he is also required to meet *the classes* separately. Thus every individual comes under his immediate notice, and he becomes acquainted, more or less, with the spiritual state of all, taking the occasion for administering the counsel which every case demands.

In these visitations he is required to "be very mild, but very strict," that he may affectionately, and yet with the necessary efficiency, exercise a pastor's care over every member of his charge.

In reference to all the members of the different classes, he is required "to enforce vigorously, but calmly, all the rules of the society." (See *Discipline*, p. 54.)

^o These meetings, although not always denominated by this name, are common among us. Sometimes they are called general classes, sometimes fellowship or communion meetings; but by whatever name they are called, the thing *itself* is familiar to most of us.

In thus generally enforcing the discipline of the Church, he is materially aided by the leaders' meeting, while his own personal inspection of the several classes contributes to a more satisfactory result in this respect, than could be obtained by a dependence on the leaders alone. He judges, in a great measure, for himself, while, at the same time, he has an opportunity of comparing notes with those who are appointed to act under and assist him in this, as well as other departments of his pastoral work. "Where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors, there is safety." Prov. xi, 14.

Through this most excellent system of classes, the preacher is enabled to perform his important duties, and to fulfil his obligations to God and the Church, with the greatest regularity, and in the most effectual and satisfactory manner. It cannot be doubted but what this means has, in a great measure, accomplished among us its design. Those brought into the Church have been hereby preserved to us and to Christ, and the general spiritual interests of God's people have been promoted in the highest degree, and thus the duty of our ministers towards the heritage of the Lord, which is the great thing aimed at, has been performed with the most satisfactory and encouraging results.

The Methodist minister, in entering upon a circuit or station, finds that there are different societies or neighbourhoods, comprising in many cases a great number of souls, who, for their greatest spiritual prosperity, require constant care and oversight. In his own pastoral labours he calls upon them all at their respective houses, and in this manner makes himself

as pastoral as his varied circumstances and multiplied duties will admit; but it is very evident to the most cursory observer, that if his pastorate is of any extent, before he completes the circle of his regular visits, those with whom he commenced may, in the mean time, have seriously erred and wandered out of the way. An occasional visit from the pastor, though repeated with comparative frequency, will not answer all the ends proposed. It is most certain, that, in general, he cannot visit and give religious counsel to every member of his charge, as often as the case requires. There is wanted a supervision more special and direct, and one by which his members are rendered tangible at all times. In the Christian Churches of the age generally, there seems to be no way of meeting this pressing exigency. But the economy of Methodism provides for this want. Here the system of classes steps in to the aid of the minister, and by this means, if the plan is carried out in all its details, his work, as a Christian pastor, is more completely, and with better final results, accomplished.

Whatever deficiency there is on his part, unavoidable from the nature of the case, is supplied by the zealous effort of a faithful leader, and the peculiarities of every case are met and disposed of by this most excellent and necessary officer.



C.

WE append, on the next page, a specimen of the *New Class-Book*, published at the Methodist Book Concern, to illustrate the manner in which a class-book should be kept, so as to show, at one view, the attendance and payments of the members.

The respective headings show the uses of the several columns.

The abbreviations are:—*p.* for present; *a.* for absent; *s.* for sick; and *d.* for distant.

Opposite each name, you have the weekly attendance and payment of each member. Below is the sum total of the weekly payments, with a line to be entered by the stewards for the amounts paid over to them.

No.	Relation in Life.	Subscription Weekly.	A. D. 1851.		JANUARY					
			Names.							
				1	8	15	22	29		
1	M.	25	James Jones, <i>Leader</i>	p. 25	p. 25	p. 25	p. 25	p. 25	p. 25	
2	S.	12½	Edward Walter	p. 12½	p. 12½	p. 12½	p. 12½	p. 12½	p. 12½	
3	W.	06¼	Mary Walter	p. 6¼	p. 6¼	p. 6¼	p. 6¼	a.		
4	S.	04	Stephen Potts	p. 50	s. ×	s. ×	s. ×	d. ×		
			Amount of Class Receipts . .	93¾						
			Received by Stewards . . .	93¾						

1871

1872

1873

1874

1875

